



COMBATING TERRORISM CENTER AT WEST POINT

# CTC SENTINEL

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## About the CTC Sentinel

The Combating Terrorism Center is an independent educational and research institution based in the Department of Social Sciences at the United States Military Academy, West Point. The CTC Sentinel harnesses the Center's global network of scholars and practitioners to understand and confront contemporary threats posed by terrorism and other forms of political violence.

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## Lashkar-i-Tayyiba: One Year After Mumbai

By Stephen Tankel



An Indian soldier outside the Taj Mahal Palace & Tower Hotel on November 29, 2008 in Mumbai. - Photo by Uriel Sinai/Getty Images

ONE YEAR AGO, 10 gunmen from Lashkar-i-Tayyiba (LT) laid siege to multiple targets in India's financial capital of Mumbai over the course of three days. The group's target selection revealed a desire to strike not only at India, but also at Western interests in the country. The coordinated attacks killed 166 people, including 28 foreign nationals, among them Americans and a Briton.<sup>1</sup> While a strong anti-Western element has always been present in LT's ideology, the strikes represented the latest evolution of a peripheral jihad against Western interests.

LT's peripheral jihad began soon after September 11, 2001, and has expanded in recent years. India remains the primary target for LT attacks, but the group now clearly threatens the West as well.

This article first examines the nature of LT attacks against India, and then assesses the threat it poses to Western targets in India and abroad.<sup>2</sup>

### The Main Enemy: India

LT's leadership remains committed to an India-first approach.<sup>3</sup> Peace with India is antithetical to the group's ideology. It would also make LT irrelevant to Pakistan's government and military,

<sup>2</sup> This article's focus is on the form and function of possible LT terrorist attacks and the different roles the group might play in them. Variables that could trigger short-term shifts in LT targeting priorities are not addressed, nor is the group's participation in the Afghan insurgency. This article also does not cover in any depth LT's increased collaboration in Pakistan's tribal areas with militants attacking the Pakistani state.

<sup>3</sup> Personal interview, member of JuD senior leadership, Lahore, Pakistan, May 8, 2009; Personal interview, high-ranking JuD official, Lahore, Pakistan, May 6, 2009; Personal interview, member of LT, Rawalpindi, Pakistan, May 13, 2009; Personal interview, member of LT, Faisalabad, Pakistan, May 13, 2009.

<sup>1</sup> "Final Report: Mumbai Terror Attack Cases," 37th Court, Mumbai, India, February 25, 2009.

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which have played a historical role in supporting the group's operations. Evidence suggests the group is prepared to support attacks against the West, but not at the expense of its war against India. For example, David Headley (formerly known as Daood Gilani)—one of two Chicago men arrested in October 2009 on suspicion of planning terrorist attacks against the offices of *Jyllands-Posten* in Denmark—trained with LT and had worked for the group since at least 2006.<sup>4</sup> LT willingly coordinated with Headley on attacking Danish targets, but when the opportunity arose to use him to prepare new attacks in India, LT suggested he shift focus to South Asia. In other words, the group prioritized staging new attacks in India instead of following through with planned attacks in the West.<sup>5</sup> The 2008 Mumbai attacks, for example, achieved both objectives: attacking India while also striking against Westerners.

Since the 2008 Mumbai attacks, militant infiltrations across the Line of Control into Indian-controlled Kashmir have escalated.<sup>6</sup> According to Indian National Security Adviser Mayankote Kelath Narayanan, however, the real LT threat is to the Indian hinterland.<sup>7</sup> This threat is two-pronged, coming from LT-supported and LT-directed attacks. It is difficult, however, to make a definitive distinction between support and execution, since it is often unclear when LT was providing direction for attacks.<sup>8</sup> The group trained many of

the Indian operatives responsible for attacks against India in recent years, directing some of them while only supporting others.<sup>9</sup> It is therefore more useful to look at the group's capabilities and how it accomplishes them.

LT began building networks in India in the early 1990s to provide logistical support for sleeper cells, to recruit Indians for training in urban terrorism and to recruit local triggermen who could conduct attacks on their own.<sup>10</sup> It also constructed transnational networks—stretching from neighboring Bangladesh and Nepal to the Middle East, Europe and the United States—to support attacks inside India.<sup>11</sup> The result is that LT is able to bring Pakistani, Indian and transnational resources to bear to train and support Indian operatives who execute attacks as well as mine indigenous Indian resources to support Pakistani operatives who launch attacks in the Indian hinterland, as was the case with the Mumbai attacks in 2008.<sup>12</sup>

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*Contemporary South Asia* 16:3 (2008).

9 For example, some of those recruited and trained in LT's camps went on to lead the Indian Mujahidin. For more, see Praveen Swami, "The Indian Mujahidin and Lashkar-i-Tayyiba's Transnational Networks," *CTC Sentinel* 2:6 (2009).

10 Personal interview, Rahul Bedi, journalist with *Jane's Intelligence Review*, New Delhi, India, January 7, 2009; Personal interview, Praveen Swami, journalist with *The Hindu*, New Delhi, India, January 8, 2009.

11 Stephen Tankel, *Storming the World Stage: The Story of Lashkar-e-Taiba* (London and New York: Hurst and Columbia University Press, forthcoming).

12 According to Fahim Ansari's interrogation report, a copy of which is in the author's possession, two Indians, Sabahuddin Ahmed and Fahim Ansari, played a pivotal role in providing reconnaissance for the attacks. LT recruited both of them earlier in the decade and each had undergone training at LT camps in Pakistan. It is worth noting that Ansari joined the group while living in Dubai, and his route from there to an LT training camp in Pakistan involved transit through multiple countries. In an Indian interrogation report, Ansari admitted he met with LT commanders in Pakistan approximately a year before the Mumbai attacks, and they directed him to undertake reconnaissance. Initially, he was shown Google Earth maps of Mumbai and asked to note important places. In subsequent meetings, he was directed to return to Mumbai and was tasked with surveilling a number of targets, including several attacked by LT *fidayin* in November 2008. Ansari is believed to have given a video and a map of targets to Ahmed, who in turn passed the material to LT commanders in Pakistan. Separately, Indian officials are also investigating whether the two Chicago men re-

cent history suggests LT is more likely to provide support to local actors for bombing attacks and to rely on support from local actors for *fidayin*<sup>13</sup> attacks perpetrated by LT operatives. The former are intended to bleed India through a consistent campaign of coercion, manifested in attacks designed to kill as many Indians as possible,

**“In the short-term, the more likely threats from LT terrorism to the West are two-fold: to Western targets in India where the group may fold them into terrorist attacks; and to Western countries where the group may facilitate or provide support for terrorist attacks.”**

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whereas the latter are intended to be higher-profile operations, staged for maximum political effect.

A study by the Indian National Security Guard indicated that bombings in India increased in frequency and geographic spread after 2003.<sup>14</sup> Attacks were generally directed against soft targets such as trains, markets and, occasionally, tourist or religious sites. LT's involvement is suspected in many of these attacks, primarily as a financier, trainer and logistical supplier for Indians who selected the targets and executed the attacks.<sup>15</sup> In contrast, LT

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cently arrested for plotting attacks in Denmark and India were also involved in providing reconnaissance for the Mumbai attacks.

13 LT's *fidayin* attacks involve small numbers of militants storming a target using small-arms and grenades. The aim is not to be martyred immediately. These battles often last many hours and sometimes more than a day. In some instances the attackers escape, whereas in others they do not. If the attacker dies during the operation, it is because he fought to the death rather than dying by his own hand, which LT maintains make these attacks distinct from suicide bombing operations.

14 Nishit Dholabhai, "New Bomber: Indian and Everywhere," *Telegraph*, February 25, 2008.

15 Personal interview, Praveen Swami, journalist with *The Hindu*, New Delhi, India, January 8, 2009; Personal

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4 *Jyllands-Posten* published editorial cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad.

5 *U.S.A. v. David C. Headley*, "Criminal Complaint," Northern District of Illinois, 2009.

6 Hizbul Mujahidin, another militant group, appears to be contributing cadres who work closely with LT militants to infiltrate across the Line of Control. For more, see Praveen Swami, "The Red Hot Line," *Outlook India*, September 4, 2009.

7 Siddharth Varadarajan, "Hafiz Saeed not 'Litmus Test' but Pakistan Action Important: NSA," *The Hindu*, August 31, 2009.

8 For example, it is unclear whether LT provided direction for the 2006 Mumbai railway bombings. It does, however, appear to have recruited some of the Indian operatives involved in the 2006 Mumbai attacks and facilitated their transit into Pakistan for training as well as helping to stitch different Indian modules together for the operations. For more, see Praveen Swami, "New Proof on Mumbai Blasts," *The Hindu*, August 1, 2006; Praveen Swami, "The Well-Tempered Jihad: The Politics and Practice of Post-2002 Islamist Terrorism in India,"

does not “farm out” *fidayin* attacks to local triggermen, but dispatches its own highly trained operatives.<sup>16</sup>

LT continues to devote significant resources to the recruitment and support of local actors to strike targets of opportunity within India while plotting high-profile *fidayin* attacks of its own. Six known LT-driven terrorist plots were foiled between the Mumbai attacks in November 2008 and July 2009, according to official Indian sources.<sup>17</sup> The recent arrests of David Headley and Tahawwur Hussain Rana in Chicago appear to have disrupted a seventh. Among those arrested in India earlier this year is Abu Taher, an LT explosives expert. He allegedly was tasked with establishing a network in India's northeast and in the districts of West Bengal that border Bangladesh, where LT is increasing its presence.<sup>18</sup> The group is also believed to retain strong networks in New Delhi, Mumbai, Gujarat, Agra, Hyderabad and Uttar Pradesh. In short, the threat of LT-directed and LT-supported terrorism against India remains high.

#### The Peripheral Jihad: Western Interests

While LT's leadership remains committed to an India-first approach, some elements within the group increasingly prioritize global jihadist objectives. One member of the LT's above-ground wing, Jama'at-ud-Da'wa (JuD), admitted a number of cadres are motivated more by defending against what they see as a “Western war against Islam” than by the Kashmiri cause.<sup>19</sup>

interview, Suba Chandran, deputy director at the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, New Delhi, India, January 5, 2009.

<sup>16</sup> Sabahuddin Ahmed became the first Indian national to command Pakistani fighters when he led a *fidayin* attack on the Central Reserve Police Force camp in Rampur, Uttar Pradesh in 2008. By this time, Ahmed had been involved with LT for a number of years, having spent two periods of time with the group in Pakistan (2002-2003 and then post-2006). Before his arrest, he also provided vital support for the 2008 Mumbai attacks.

<sup>17</sup> Kanchan Lakshman, “Cross-Border Terrorism: Pakistan's Complicity Uninterrupted,” *Political and Defence Weekly* 7:43 (2009).

<sup>18</sup> “LeT Has Opened New Wing in N-E: Cop,” *Times of India*, March 8, 2009; “Police Verifying Reports on LeT's New Wing,” *The Hindu*, March 9, 2009; “Blast ‘Expert’ on Hire Drive,” *Telegraph-Calcutta*, March 9, 2009.

<sup>19</sup> Personal interview, high-ranking JuD official, Lahore, Pakistan, May 6, 2009.

Other LT members insinuate that action against the United States and its allies is partly a consequence of perceived favoritism toward India. For them, India remains the primary enemy, but the United States is the primary impediment to waging LT's jihad of choice.<sup>20</sup> In either case, the result is that LT has expanded its target set to include Westerners.

The question is not whether LT will be involved in attacks against the West, but rather the nature of that involvement. It is important to distinguish between operations such as the Mumbai attacks and those in which it plays a smaller or supporting role. LT recruited and trained operatives specifically for the

**“In exchange for retaining a primary focus on attacking India, being relatively inactive in Pakistan and keeping a historically lower-profile in al-Qa`ida's global jihad, LT has been allowed to operate more openly than other militant groups.”**

Mumbai attacks, chose the targets, and deployed other operatives to undertake reconnaissance. It was responsible for every phase of the attack process and exerted control over all of the operatives involved. The group is less likely to be involved to this degree in an attack against a Western country and more likely to provide facilitation or support to other groups or semi-independent operators within its own networks.

This does not mean the threat of a purely LT-driven major terrorist attack in a Western country can be ruled out. Yet LT leaders operate out of Lahore and Pakistan-controlled Kashmir, not from a hidden redoubt along the

<sup>20</sup> Personal interview, member of JuD senior leadership, Lahore, Pakistan, May 8, 2009; Personal interview, high-ranking JuD official, Lahore, Pakistan, May 6, 2009; Personal interview, member of LT, Faisalabad, Pakistan, May 13, 2009.

Afghanistan-Pakistan border. This *lebensraum* carries with it a number of benefits, but also serves as a leverage point. Due to the risks involved in prosecuting a major terrorist operation in the West, plausible deniability takes on greater importance. International pressure on Pakistan likely would have been far greater had LT launched the Mumbai attacks in a Western country.

LT appears more risk averse with regard to attacks in the West than in India. Indeed, David Headley expressed frustration in his e-mails to another operative about LT's preoccupation with India at the expense of attacks in Denmark, accusing the group of having “rotten guts” and being too cautious when it came to Western targets.<sup>21</sup> It is too early to assess whether recent reports that LT operatives planned to attack the U.S. Embassy and Indian High Commission in Dhaka, Bangladesh are accurate.<sup>22</sup> Yet given the group's targeting of Westerners inside India in the past, it is conceivable that they would strike Western targets in other South Asian countries as well.

In part, LT's India-first focus stems from the fact that this cause remains popular with Pakistan's military establishment. Unlike other groups that flaunt their relationship with al-Qa`ida and the Pakistani Taliban, LT avoids overt involvement even as it collaborates covertly. Although it has provided episodic support for operations in Pakistan to some of these outfits—mainly in the form of safe haven, reconnaissance and false identity papers—it remains one of the few groups that has not launched attacks in the country.<sup>23</sup> In exchange for retaining a primary focus on attacking India, being relatively inactive in Pakistan and keeping a historically lower-profile in al-Qa`ida's global jihad, LT has been allowed to operate more openly than other militant groups.

<sup>21</sup> *U.S.A. v. David C. Headley*.

<sup>22</sup> “Bangladesh Police Arrest Three Pakistani Suspects,” *Dawn*, November 13, 2009.

<sup>23</sup> Personal interview, senior official in Pakistan's security services, Pakistan, May 2009; Personal interview, member of Pakistan's anti-terrorism force, Pakistan, May 2009; Personal interview, senior Western diplomat, Islamabad, Pakistan, May 16, 2009.



The Pakistani security services have cracked down on LT to different degrees at different times, but as a means of controlling the group and not dismantling it. The degree to which such control still exists is hotly debated, but it is fair to say LT is neither completely under state control nor has it totally slipped the state's reins. It will push the envelope to the degree possible, but appears to be more risk averse than other jihadist organizations in the country. This could change if LT's leadership believes it is being pushed too far and has nothing left to lose. Alternatively, if the group believes it will suffer no consequences for its actions, this too could lead it to plot a terrorist attack in a Western country and dedicate the necessary resources for such an operation.

The capabilities exist for it to do so. LT has constructed transnational networks that enable reconnaissance as well as logistical and financial facilitation. It also clearly has foreign operatives prepared to undertake attacks in the West, as well as the capability to recruit and train more fighters.<sup>24</sup> Currently, LT may consider these operatives more valuable for the fundraising and logistical support they provide. This calculus could change, however.

#### Short-Term Threats to Western Interests

Despite these capabilities, in the short-term the more likely threats from LT terrorism to the West are two-fold: to Western targets in India where the group may fold them into terrorist attacks; and to Western countries where the group may facilitate or provide support for terrorist attacks.

#### *The Threat to Western Targets in India*

The 2008 Mumbai attacks represent the first instance in which LT successfully included Westerners and Jews in a

terrorist attack in the Indian hinterland, but not the first time an LT-trained operative attempted to do so. For example, Riyazuddin Nasir (also known as Mohammed Ghouse), a resident of Hyderabad, trained with the LT for 12-18 months between October 2005 and July 2007.<sup>25</sup> Although he later broke contact with the group, Nasir claims that during his training he spoke with LT's Operational Commander Zakiur Rehman Lakhvi about setting off a series of bombs targeting American and Israeli tourists on Goa's crowded beaches over the Christmas-New Year period in 2007. Police arrested Nasir in the process of preparing the attacks.<sup>26</sup>

According to the confession of Mohammed Ajmal Mohammed Amir Kasab, the lone surviving Mumbai gunman, the *fidayin* were told that India's financial strength was in Mumbai, which was also a tourist destination. Hence it was imperative to target places frequented by foreigners to hurt India economically. In the same confession, Kasab asserted that they were also told American, British and Israeli citizens must pay for the Muslim suffering caused by their countries.<sup>27</sup>

It is unclear at this time whether any elements within the Pakistan Army or ISI were involved in planning the Mumbai attacks and if so whether they were aware that LT was including Westerners in the target set. No definitive evidence has come to light suggesting such involvement. The attacks, however, clearly did not constitute a red line for

Pakistan's government or military since the group continues to operate. This does not mean every attack inside India will target Western interests, but the threat of such attacks must now be included within its wider targeting options. Furthermore, the recently disrupted plot in Bangladesh and the group's presence in Afghanistan suggests this threat is regional.<sup>28</sup>

#### *The Threat to Western Countries*

Whereas LT is likely to be the lead agent in attacks that include foreign interests in the Indian hinterland, the greatest threat it poses to Western countries comes from the support it can provide to other actors both within Pakistan and internationally.

LT's training infrastructure receives more scrutiny than in the past, but the group still operates more freely than other militant outfits in Pakistan. This makes it an appealing destination for Western militants. A number of foreigners known to have passed through LT's camps received religious indoctrination and guerrilla warfare training, rather than instruction in urban terrorism; however, Western officials in Pakistan believe that there have been instances when LT did provide such instruction.<sup>29</sup> They also emphasize that LT trainers, similar to those from other groups, sometimes provide their expertise (mainly bomb-making) to potential terrorists for money.<sup>30</sup>

Western security officials continue to worry that LT serves as a gateway to al-Qa`ida or other actors actively seeking so-called "clean skins" from the West to train for terrorist attacks

25 K. Srinivas Reddy, "Islamist Terrorists Planned Blasts in Goa," *The Hindu*, February 2, 2008; T.A. Johnson, "Muzammil, Lakhvi: Same Names, ISI Links in IISc Attack Probe," *Indian Express*, December 8, 2008.

26 By the time of his arrest, Nasir was scared that LT had assassinated a fellow operative in Karachi and might come after him. He broke contact with the group, but carried ahead with the attack. Local police in Karnataka arrested Nasir and an accomplice while stealing motorcycles, which they planned to use as the delivery mechanism for improvised explosive devices. Believing them to be part of a motorcycle-theft ring, local authorities were about to release Nasir on bail when a member of Indian counterintelligence happened to see his name on the bail list while meeting a friend from the court for coffee. Personal interview, Praveen Swami, journalist with *The Hindu*, via phone, June 29, 2009.

27 Transcript of confession by Mohammed Ajmal Mohammed Amir Kasab before an Indian Magistrate, February 20-21, 2009, author in possession of hard copy.

28 "Bangladesh Police Arrest Three Pakistani Suspects."

29 For example, Omar Khyam, who spearheaded the fertilizer bomb plot in the United Kingdom, and Dhiren Barot, who became an international operative for al-Qa`ida, both trained with the group. David Headley (formerly known as Daood Gilani), who was arrested in October 2009 for planning terrorist attacks in Denmark, also appears to have entered the world of Pakistani militancy through the doors of an LT training camp.

30 Personal interview, Western diplomat, Pakistan, December 29, 2009. Regarding LT's willingness to train Westerners, also see Josh Meyer, "Extremist Group Works in the Open in Pakistan," *Los Angeles Times*, December 18, 2007. Regarding the practice of hiring a trainer, see Peter Bergen, "Al Qaeda-on-Thames: UK Plotters Connected," *Washington Post*, April 30, 2007.

24 In 2003, LT dispatched a Frenchman named Willie Brigitte, who trained in its camps, to Australia to assist local actors in attacking a number of targets. Brigitte later claimed there was an LT cell based in Sydney formed around Fahim Khalid Lodhi, who is also suspected of training with the group. Lodhi met Brigitte upon his arrival and remained in contact with him until his arrest and deportation to France. Lodhi was arrested as well and later convicted of plotting to blow up the Sydney electricity grid. See Liz Jackson, "Program Transcript: Willie Brigitte," Australian Broadcasting Corporation, February 9, 2004; *Fahim Khalid Lodhi v. Regina*, New South Wales Court of Criminal Appeal, 2007.

back home.<sup>31</sup> British Pakistanis remain particularly well placed to use what has been termed the “Kashmir Escalator” in which they employ familial connections in Pakistan-controlled Kashmir to connect with LT or Jaysh-i-Muhammad. After procuring initial training, some of these men are introduced to al-Qa`ida operatives.<sup>32</sup> In 2009, British security officials estimated that approximately 4,000 people were trained in this way since 9/11 and accounted for three quarters of the serious terrorist plots faced by the United Kingdom.<sup>33</sup>

While LT has maintained some distance from the nexus of militant outfits waging war against the Pakistani state from the North-West Frontier Province and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, its collaboration with those actors has increased in recent years. Much of the cooperation focuses around recruiting, training and infiltrating militants into eastern Afghanistan to fight against coalition forces, but LT has also provided safe houses and other support within Pakistan. LT's members are not portable to the same degree as militants from other outfits, but connections do exist with other groups at all organizational levels, which enable LT's foreign operatives and trainees access to these groups.

Internationally, LT's transnational networks make it an ideal global jihadist facilitator. LT operatives have been recruiting and fundraising in the Middle East and the United Kingdom since the 1990s.<sup>34</sup> It expanded these operations into Europe more recently, and has ties to the United States as well.<sup>35</sup> Some of its connections exist through Ahl-e-Hadith mosques as well as the expatriate Pakistani community,

while others were formed through recruitment or the provision of training to foreigners. The result is that LT has operatives in the Middle East, the United Kingdom, North America, Europe and possibly Australia, who could be used to facilitate attacks in the West.

Circumstantial evidence suggests LT provided logistical and possibly financial support via its networks in Paris to Richard Reid, the al-Qa`ida-directed “shoebomber” who attempted to blow up American Airlines Flight #63 in 2001.<sup>36</sup> LT operatives are also suspected of providing some of the financing for the plot to blow up 12 transatlantic airplanes using liquid explosives in 2006 as well as facilitating access for some of the alleged bombers to Jundallah,<sup>37</sup> the group that brought them to FATA for training.<sup>38</sup> More recently, LT has increased its activity in Bangladesh, and there is concern its networks there could be used to move terrorists out of and into Europe.<sup>39</sup>

Nodes within LT networks often have multiple alliances, or at least connections to other groups. The overlapping nature of these networks—inside and outside of Pakistan—enables LT to threaten the West, but LT is unable to enforce definitive control over the breadth of its networks. Once again, the recent case

of David Headley is illustrative of this phenomenon. Through an individual associated with LT and Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islam (HuJI), Headley came in contact with Ilyas Kashmiri, a HuJI leader notoriously close to al-Qa`ida. When LT suggested prioritizing an attack against India, Headley simply began working more closely with Kashmiri to launch the attacks in Denmark against LT's wishes.<sup>40</sup>

### Conclusion

Since LT's infrastructure is transnational, eradicating its presence on Pakistani soil will not nullify the threat entirely and must be done in a way that avoids unleashing additional master-less militants on the region. This is a cautionary note, however, and not an excuse to avoid dismantling the group's military infrastructure. Unfortunately, there is little hope Pakistan will do so in the near-term since the group remains a potential asset to the state. LT has historically been Pakistan's most reliable proxy against India and elements within the military clearly wish to maintain this capability.

The result is that one year after Mumbai, the group remains intact. As long as the LT's military apparatus exists, so too does the threat that it will be used again.

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31 Personal interview, Western diplomat, Pakistan, December 29, 2009; Personal interview, senior Western diplomat, Islamabad, Pakistan, May 16, 2009; Personal interview, member of Special Branch at New Scotland Yard, date and location withheld upon request.

32 Personal interview, Western diplomat, Pakistan, December 20, 2008.

33 In this case, Lashkar-i-Jhangvi was mentioned as the other group of primary concern, although British officials were also worried about Harkat-ul-Mujahidin and Jaysh-i-Muhammad. See Jeremy Page, “How Pakistan Can Help to Stop Terrorist Camps Training Britons,” *Times of London*, March 25, 2009.

34 Tinkel.

35 Ibid.

36 The LT operatives who are believed to have provided this assistance were associated with the mosque of the Chemin Droit Association, which is the “representative of the Jamiat al Hadith political party” in Paris, and were linked to channels for sending volunteers from France to training camps in Pakistan. This information is based on “Person's Prosecuted: Ghulam Mustafa Ram, Hassan el Cheguar, Hakim Mokhfi, Kamel Lakhram,” a document from the Magistrate's Court of Paris that is in the author's possession.

37 This refers to a Pakistani jihadist group that previously fought in Indian-controlled Kashmir and is now close to al-Qa`ida. It should not be confused with the People's Resistance Movement of Iran (PRMI), which is also known as Jundallah, and claims to fight on behalf of Sunni Muslims in Iran from its base in Pakistan's Baluchistan Province.

38 Praveen Swami, “Evidence Mounts of Pakistan Links,” *The Hindu*, August 12, 2006; Dexter Filkins and Souad Mekhennet, “Pakistani Charity Under Scrutiny In Financing of Airline Bomb Plot,” *New York Times*, August 13, 2006; “UK Police Probe Terror Money Trail: Investigators Believe Alleged Plot Tied to Asian Quake Relief,” CNN, August 16, 2006.

39 Personal interview, senior Western diplomat, Islamabad, Pakistan, May 16, 2009.

40 *U.S.A. v. David C. Headley*.

## Success of the Meta-Narrative: How Jihadists Maintain Legitimacy

By Akil N. Awan

AL-QA`IDA'S IDEOLOGICAL STRUGGLE is almost entirely predicated on issues of legitimacy. Al-Qa`ida and its followers are constantly striving to convince supporters, neutral audiences and even enemy publics about the justness of their cause, the morality of their strategy and the legality of their methods. Al-Qa`ida's second-in-command, Ayman al-Zawahiri, famously alluded to the importance of the ideological battle in a 2005 letter to Abu Mus`ab al-Zarqawi, stating, "More than half of this battle is taking place in the battlefield of the media. We are in a media battle in a race for the hearts and minds of our *umma*."<sup>1</sup>

Achieving legitimacy has been a challenge for the jihadist movement. Successive attempts to propose their worldview and establish credibility in the Muslim world have been hampered by their acts of violence and terrorism that ostensibly violate religious and cultural mores. Nevertheless, global jihadism has continued to attract a surprisingly diverse set of individuals to its ranks. The ideological cohesion within this eclectic cohort has been derived principally from the alluring simplicity of the jihadists' meta-narrative. According to this narrative, jihadists associated with al-Qa`ida or its ideology are the crucial vanguard standing in the way of a historical global assault on Islam by the "Zionist-Crusader Alliance." The jihadists consistently attempt to convince Muslims to view contemporary conflicts through this prism. This is achieved by building grassroots legitimacy among populations, mobilizing public support for their operations and consolidating their existing constituencies. Failure to achieve legitimacy, al-Zawahiri warned, will cause the jihadist movement to be "crushed in the shadows, far from the masses who are distracted and fearful."<sup>2</sup>

This article will show how jihadists manufacture religious legitimacy, why their battlefield operations provide them a distinct authority exceeding that of established religious scholars, and warns that the jihadist meta-narrative could be increasingly adopted by larger segments of the Muslim community in the future.

### Manufacturing Legitimacy

There are a number of methods pursued by jihadists to manufacture legitimacy within the jihadist landscape. Most commonly, jihadists engage in processes of ad hoc self-legitimation, in which selective excerpts from the Qur'an and prophetic traditions, deployed both ahistorically and without context, are used to dispute mainstream interpretations, or to formulate novel interpretations that violate clear tenets of Islam.

One example is the unlawful targeting of civilians.<sup>3</sup> This highly discerning reading of the Islamic canon<sup>4</sup> is exacerbated by the recourse to quasi-religious "authorities" who serve to corroborate and support these aberrant worldviews. Remarkably, these "religious" leaders are themselves rarely trained in the classical religious sciences and, therefore, are unqualified to issue religious edicts or engage in serious exegesis of the Qur'an and other religious texts.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the lack of

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Prophet...will not be accomplished by the mujahid movement while it is cut off from public support."

3 For a discussion of some of the arguments put forward by radicals to justify the killings of civilians, see Quintan Wiktorowicz, *Radical Islam Rising: Muslim Extremism in the West* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005).

4 The global jihadists' employment of the Qur'an to bolster their claims is also highly selective and revolves around a subset of approximately 75 verses from the Qur'an's total of 6,236 verses.

5 In fact, the vast majority of both jihadist ideologues and their followers have undergone modern secular educations. Usama bin Ladin, for example, studied civil engineering. Both Ayman al-Zawahiri and Sayyid Imam al-Sharif (one of the founding members of al-Qa`ida) studied medicine. Abu Mus`ab al-Suri (the most important strategist of modern jihadism) and Khalid Shaykh Muhammad (the principle architect of the 9/11 attacks) both studied mechanical engineering. Muhammad `Atif (al-Qa`ida's former military chief) was an agricultural engineer and later a policeman. Abd al-Salam Faraj (who wrote *The Neglected Duty*, which raised jihad to an individual religious obligation, and who was executed for the assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat) was

religious credentials among the jihadist leadership has long been recognized as one of their potential weaknesses.

Aware of their lack of theological literacy and legitimacy, jihadist leaders adorn themselves in the regalia of religion, most recognizably their impeccable white robes, pious beards and saintly turbans. This practice,

**"By being perceived as taking action against supposed wrongs committed against Muslims globally, the jihadists are able to undermine the credibility of other dissenting voices who use rhetoric alone in defense of the umma."**

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combined with a superfluous religious-canon rhetoric, serves to cloak what are often highly political or worldly aims. More problematic, their lack of religious credentials do not necessarily divest jihadist leaders of the religious mantle, as these quasi-scholars are often viewed by Muslim communities as more truthful, genuine and rightly-guided than "mainstream" religious scholars, who are often perceived as being tainted by complicity with and subservience to secular or despotic regimes in the Muslim world. Moreover, this pariah status often grants jihadist leaders autonomy from political machinations, internecine conflicts and "worldly" affairs, within which mainstream scholars often become embroiled. This allows jihadist leaders to yield a potent legitimacy not based on scholarly erudition.

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an electrician. Abu Mus`ab al-Zarqawi (the former head of al-Qa`ida in Iraq) did not even manage to complete his high school education. Indeed, even Sayyid Qutb, often regarded as the ideological godfather of jihadism, was a journalist and literary critic.

1 "Letter from Ayman al-Zawahiri to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi," U.S. Office of the Director of National Intelligence, July 9, 2005.

2 Ibid. According to al-Zawahiri, "the victory of Islam and the establishment of a caliphate in the manner of the



Legitimation also focuses inordinately on elevating the “lesser jihad”<sup>6</sup> to an individual duty, or *fard `ayn*, and an obligatory sixth pillar of Islam.<sup>7</sup> Attempts at extolling the virtues of jihad and convincing fellow Muslims of its centrality to their lives are not new, but rather follow the tone and precedent set by earlier militant works written during the 1970s and 1980s. The most important among these

**“Global jihadism’s legitimacy has been predicated in large part on the ascendancy of deeds over words, and most jihadists have attempted to usurp traditional authority from clerics and religious leaders in this way.”**

historical works include the widely-acclaimed *Defense of the Muslim Lands: The First Obligation After Faith* (1979) and *Join the Caravan* (1987), two works penned by the Palestinian scholar and chief proponent of the Afghan jihad against the Soviet Union, Shaykh Abdullah Azzam. Equally important was the seminal jihadist diatribe against the established Sunni position on jihad, *The Neglected Duty* (1981), authored by Abd al-Salam Faraj, an electrician and leader of Egyptian Islamic Jihad, a group responsible for the assassination of President Anwar Sadat in 1981.<sup>8</sup>

6 The “lesser jihad” refers to conventional warfare against an external enemy (and is predominantly defensive in nature), whereas the “greater jihad” entails every Muslim’s internal spiritual struggle. For more, see Reuven Firestone, *Jihad: The Origin of Holy War in Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

7 Michael David Bonner, *Jihad in Islamic History: Doctrines and Practice* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

8 Johannes J.G. Jansen, *The Neglected Duty: The Creed of Sadat’s Assassins and Islamic Resurgence in the Middle East* (New York: Macmillan, 1986); Richard C. Martin, “Discourse on Jihad in the Postmodern Era,” in Jonathan E. Brockopp ed., *Islamic Ethics of Life: Abortion, War* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), p. 160

#### Men of Deeds, Not Words

Beyond this religious imperative, global jihadism’s legitimacy has been predicated in large part on the ascendancy of deeds over words, and most jihadists have attempted to usurp traditional authority from clerics and religious leaders in this way. Mohammed Siddique Khan, the ringleader of the July 7, 2005 London bombers, spoke disparagingly of Muslim scholars in the United Kingdom and implied that “real men” such as himself, whose deeds and sacrifices were self-evident, were most worthy of the Prophet Muhammad’s legacy:

Our so-called scholars today are content with their Toyotas and their semi-detached houses...If they fear the British government more than they fear Allah then they must desist in giving talks, lectures and passing fatwas and they need to stay at home—they’re useless—and leave the job to the real men, the true inheritors of the prophet.<sup>9</sup>

The meteoric rise of Abu Mus`ab al-Zarqawi, the late leader of al-Qa`ida in Iraq (AQI), epitomized this trend. Despite being theologically illiterate and hailing from a criminal background, al-Zarqawi achieved immense popularity and prestige as a result of his notorious video beheadings and the instigation of bloody sectarian strife in Iraq. His violent excesses were so flagrant that even al-Qa`ida’s central leadership found them disconcerting, with al-Zawahiri rebuking the AQI leader:

Among the things which the feelings of the Muslim populace who love and support you will never find palatable, also, are the scenes of slaughtering the hostages. You should not be deceived by the praise of some of the zealous young men and their description of you as the shaykh of the slaughterers.<sup>10</sup>

Nevertheless, al-Zarqawi’s grisly actions continued to propel him to international prominence, evident in the bestowal of two particularly dubious

9 Ibid.

10 “Letter from Ayman al-Zawahiri to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.”

honors: the title of the *amir* of AQI, and a U.S. bounty of \$25 million for his death or capture, matching the reward for Usama bin Ladin himself at the time.

Placed in stark contrast to perceived apathy, weakness or inaction of Muslim rulers, clergy and even other Islamists, the jihadists’ tangible response to an external threat is uniquely placed in the Muslim world. Regardless of how odious or counterproductive this response may be, the jihadists cannot be accused by their opponents of inaction. Therefore, while revisionist former jihadists such as Sayyid Imam al-Sharif (also known as Dr. Fadl) may decry al-Qa`ida’s tactics, or dispute the outcomes of their actions, they have been unable to offer effective alternatives. As a result, by

**“Jihadist ‘field experience’ endows them the ability to be free from error of judgment and action, and outside the scope of scholarly criticism.”**

being perceived as taking action against supposed wrongs committed against Muslims globally, the jihadists are able to undermine the credibility of other dissenting voices who use rhetoric alone in defense of the *umma*. Consequently, the jihadists are able to arrogate themselves the authority of Islamic officialdom.

Increasingly, this brazen self-aggrandizement has given rise to claims of religious infallibility, which insists that jihadist “field experience” endows them the ability to be free from error of judgment and action, and outside the scope of scholarly criticism.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, they do not need to exonerate themselves from accusations and critiques,<sup>12</sup> but rather

11 E. Alshech, “The Emergence of the ‘Infallible Jihad Fighter’ – The Salafi Jihadists’ Quest for Religious Legitimacy,” Middle East Media Research Institute, 2008.

12 Al-Zawahiri has attempted to engage his critics through his text *The Exoneration* (2008) and through the 2008 virtual open meeting facilitated by al-Sahab. His response, however, has focused principally on the critics’ inability to comprehend the “true” state of the situation due to their absence from the fronts of jihad.



insist that anyone who seeks to criticize their methods or goals must first serve alongside them on the frontlines before they are afforded that privilege. This has proven to be a particularly expedient rejoinder in the spate of recent criticisms from former jihadists such as Sayyid Imam al-Sharif, Noman bin Othman and imprisoned members of the LIFG.

Indeed, the repudiation of renowned jihadist icons such as Imam al-Sharif, who was not only present at the founding of al-Qa`ida in 1988 in Peshawar, but was also the most significant legal philosopher of the jihad during his generation, is hardly surprising. Despite their impeccable jihadist credentials, the critiques of these various revisionists are readily dismissed by a new, younger generation of jihadists, for whom the views of these older luminaries are at best deemed anachronistic, and at worst shaped by their incarceration or association with despotic regimes. In a 2008 al-Sahab video response to al-Sharif's "Document of Right Guidance for Jihad Activity in Egypt and the World," al-Qa`ida operative Abu Yahya al-Libi argued,

If this document really expresses the convictions of its putative author, why are the security apparatuses keeping him behind bars...when he could do them a much greater service elsewhere?... They should bring him to the [various] jihad fronts...to debate [with the mujahidin]...and explain their errors to them.<sup>13</sup>

The manner in which jihadist deeds are mediated and disseminated has also played a significant role in their ascendancy. With the growing sophistication of the internet and its adoption as the principle arena for the propagation of jihadism,<sup>14</sup> media efforts have increasingly focused on autonomous, user-generated content, often without official jihadist sanction.<sup>15</sup>

Rather than presenting cogent theological arguments designed to appeal to reason, this content relies far more on emotive imagery and on engendering solidarity and allegiance. Polished montages of jihadist video clips, accompanied by stirring devotional songs, appeal to the senses and render issues of theological legitimation far less important and even obsolete. This virtually-mediated propaganda of the deed is crucially important to the web-savvy youth and non-Arabic speaking Muslim diaspora audiences, both of whom contribute disproportionately to the propagation of the culture of jihadism.

#### Conclusion

If the jihadists can successfully persuade audiences that they are somehow lax in their religious observances as Muslims, or worse, are committing grave sins, they may be capable of engendering a mindset amenable to the broader jihadist worldview. London bomber Mohammed Siddique Khan provided a typical bullying harangue in his posthumously released "Martyrdom Testament,"

**"Despite tacit support for classical defensive jihad, it is ironic that the jihadists themselves continue to severely undermine their own legitimacy with their penchant for increased bloodshed and violent excess."**

stating, "Jihad is an obligation on every single one of us, men and women, and by staying at home you are turning your backs on jihad which is a major sin."<sup>16</sup>

When engaging in discussions of jihadist legitimacy, it is necessary to acknowledge the uneasy truth that a great number of their actions are beyond censure in the wider Muslim world. Against the backdrop of military invasion and occupation of two Muslim-majority countries, attacks (conventional or oth-

erwise) against military targets within these theaters are invariably considered legitimate and labeled as "classical defensive jihad." This includes improvised explosive device attacks against coalition convoys, or highly discriminate killings of U.S. soldiers by snipers. Such tactics cannot even be placed under the rubric of terrorism, and the U.S. military itself has been wary of distinguishing between insurgents and terrorists in this respect.

Yet despite tacit support for classical defensive jihad, it is ironic that the jihadists themselves continue to severely undermine their own legitimacy with their penchant for increased bloodshed and violent excess. Suicide attacks and other bombings that kill large numbers of Muslim civilians in Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan and other theaters of conflict only erode support for their cause. Moreover, attacks in Western countries specifically targeting civilians expose the fallacy of their meta-narrative. Such indiscriminate tactics, combined with their dystopic and intolerant vision of the post-jihad future, must be emphasized as they remain the jihadists' greatest ideological vulnerability.

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13 "Abu Yahya Al-Libi Rejects Sayyed Imam's 'Document of Right Guidance,' Urges Mujahideen to Continue Jihad," Middle East Media Research Institute, 2008.

14 Akil N. Awan, "Virtual Jihadist Media: Function, Legitimacy, and Radicalising Efficacy," *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 10:3 (2007): pp. 389-408.

15 Akil N. Awan and M. al-Lami, "Al-Qaeda's Virtual Crisis," *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute* 154:1

(2009): pp. 56-64.

16 Mohammed Siddique Khan, "Martyrdom Testament," 2005.

## AQIM and the Growth of International Investment in North Africa

By Geoff D. Porter

IN THE COMING YEARS, North Africa's Sahara and the Sahel regions will become more populated, easier to navigate and more interconnected with the rest of the world. Both the Sahara and Sahel are experiencing rapid population growth and even faster urbanization. The spread of technology, both low and high, has made it easier for people to move throughout the region and communicate with others outside it. Moreover, energy and mining companies' pursuit of new natural resource opportunities will expand the international presence. These factors also mean that the Sahara and Sahel will present a wider array of targets for violent actors and armed groups, such as al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).

In conjunction with the assumption that the Salafi-jihadi ideology that motivates AQIM will persist for the foreseeable future, these trends suggest that Islamist political violence (as well as related banditry and criminality) will likely intensify in the coming years. Moreover, AQIM has shown a preference for foreign targets or targets linked to foreign companies, in addition to conventional targets such as representatives of state security services. As a result, increased international investment in the region will likely become a target for AQIM.

This article examines the near-term future of energy and infrastructure growth in the Sahara and Sahel regions.<sup>1</sup>

1 This analysis leaves aside discussions of the durability and the appeal of Salafi-jihadi Islam in contrast to more prevalent Saharan and Sahelian Islamic interpretations that favor Sufi practices or conventional Maliki and Ashari ones. Instead, the analysis assumes that Salafi-jihadi ideology will persist in some form among a small section of the population. The persistence of the jihadist component of the ideology means that Islamist-inspired violence targeting non-Muslim foreigners in the Sahara and Sahel will continue. In addition, this analysis will not tackle issues such as the proliferation of small-arms in the Sahara and Sahel or the evolution of insurgent or terrorist tactics, such as the increasingly widespread use of improvised explosive devices. The analysis will project out from the current profile of AQIM activities in the Sahara and Sahel and try to anticipate how the introduc-

It identifies three trends that are likely to result in a rise of illicit activity and acts of terrorism in the Sahara and Sahel states: increased foreign investment in extractive industries and accompanying infrastructure; rapidly growing populations and strains on urban infrastructure; and increased mobility and communication.

### Energy and Infrastructure Growth

A brief overview of energy projects recently underway in the Sahara and Sahel and projects that have been announced or are planned indicates that the presence of multinational energy firms—including oil, gas, and alternative energy—is likely to increase dramatically in the coming years.

#### *Oil and Gas*

The Sahara and Sahel states are likely to experience a mini-boom in oil and gas interest.<sup>2</sup> While the pace of activity and the volume of production is not remarkable on a global context, its importance is amplified by the scarcity of industrial activity in the region at present. Even small scale activity markedly changes the landscape.

Libya, the Sahara's largest oil exporter, has shifted approaches from expanding foreign firms' access to new acreage to maximizing oil production from maturing fields. Nevertheless, acreage that was licensed to foreign firms in 2005 is only just being explored and new production from any discoveries would likely become operational in the coming years. In particular, Libya auctioned new acreage in the Murzuq basin in southwestern Libya in 2005. Libya is also likely to return to a strategy of offering new acreage to foreign firms in the future and this would only further increase foreign firms' presence in unpoliced areas in the Libyan Sahara. The Libyan Islamic Fighting Group has

tion of a wider array of targets in the region will affect the group's activities.

2 The push into the Sahara and Sahel is driven by several trends. For oil, a shrinking oil patch in what looks like a sustained new price band that makes exploration and production possible in new areas. Gas exploration is pushed by the European Union's desire for cleaner burning fuels and growing concern about Russia's increasing monopolization of European gas supplies. Brussels is keen to diversify European gas supply to avoid being at Moscow's mercy, and encouraging North African gas development is a key component to this.

not been effective in Libya for more than a decade, but it is foreseeable that Libyan veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan could infiltrate Libya and pose a risk to new potential targets.

Neighboring Algeria is more aggressively pushing exploration in remote parts of the country. In addition to ongoing exploration in the militarized zone in Algeria, the French oil company Total has announced that it is expecting gas production from its

**“The increased presence of foreign energy and mining firms throughout the Sahara and Sahel in the coming years means that AQIM will have a richer target set.”**

recently acquired Timimoun acreage in 2013. Timimoun is in southwestern Algeria in an area that has historically been a clandestine trans-Saharan route. It runs alongside National Route 6, which travels from the border with Mali north of Kidal to the Moroccan border town of Figuig. Algeria's state-owned energy company, Sonatrach, and Gaz de France-Suez announced that they expect gas production from their Touat block, near Adrar, sometime between 2013 and 2014.<sup>3</sup> A key cornerstone of Algeria's aggressive energy plan is the development of Ahnet, to the northeast of Tamanrasset, which attracted the interest of U.S. oil and gas companies in 2008 and is up for auction again in December 2009.<sup>4</sup> Algeria has done a remarkable job protecting its energy infrastructure from security threats in the north and east of the country, but it remains an open question whether it has the capacity to expand its counterterrorism efforts into new areas such as the southwest.

3 Liès Sahar, “Sonatrach et Total vont investir 1,3 milliard de dollars,” *El-Watan*, October 8, 2009.

4 Simon Martelli, “Tough Investment Climate Darkens North African Upstream Prospects,” *Middle East Economic Survey*, November 2, 2009.

While offshore Mauritanian production has disappointed expectations, international oil companies are pushing ahead with onshore exploration. Total recently announced that it has begun drilling test wells in Mauritania's Taoudeni basin, near the Algerian and Malian borders, with expectations of possible production there in 2015.<sup>5</sup> On the other side of the border, Sonatrach is exploring Block 20 in Mali's northern Taoudeni basin.<sup>6</sup> As recently as late September 2009, seven Mauritians and Malians suspected of being AQIM members were arrested in this area.<sup>7</sup>

#### *Energy Infrastructure*

In addition to the newly undertaken and pending exploration activity, the Sahara and Sahel may witness the growth of energy infrastructure such as oil and gas pipelines to transport production to markets. Most significant is the Trans-Sahara Gas Pipeline, which could bisect the Sahel and Sahara by 2015 and would be the world's longest pipeline. As its name suggests, the trans-Sahara pipeline would transport Nigerian gas across the Sahel and Sahara to the Algerian border, where it would link up with that country's infrastructure and head north to Europe. In all, the gas would travel approximately 3,000 miles—600 across Nigeria, 500 across Niger, 1,600 across Algeria, and about 300 across the sea.

The pipeline is far from a certainty. In addition to the enormous distances that leave the pipeline exposed to security risks,<sup>8</sup> the current tight credit environment and Nigerian debates about dedicating captured gas for the domestic industry versus exporting it mean that the pipeline's construction is likely to be delayed beyond the target date, if it is built at all.<sup>9</sup> In addition to

the Trans-Sahara Gas Pipeline mega project, gas projects in southwestern Algeria such as Timimoun, Touat and Ahnet would require the construction of pipeline networks to connect the remote gas fields to gas hubs further north. To protect these new feeder pipelines, the Algerian government would be required to expand its militarized zone that now encompasses the Hassi Messaoud gas fields, putting an additional strain on Algiers' already stretched military capacity in the Sahara.<sup>10</sup> New discoveries in Libya's Murzuq basin would require the construction of new pipelines to bring crude to ports on the Mediterranean coast, and Total would be forced to build pipelines from the Mauritanian interior to the coast were it to make discoveries in Taoudeni.

#### *Alternative Energy*

Europe is also looking to foster alternative energy in North Africa as a way of decreasing carbon emissions, increasing renewable energy and reducing the risk of Russian gas supply disruptions. In particular, the Berlin-based Desertec Foundation is exploring ways to develop solar and wind power in the Sahara. The plan, which has the support of German, Swiss and Spanish companies, envisions the construction of solar and wind power generation hubs throughout the Sahara. Wind generation would be concentrated on the Atlantic coast, with solar arrays installed along the Algeria-Morocco border, but also in Algeria's Hoggar and Adrar provinces. Desertec, however, faces challenges similar to those of the Trans-Sahara Gas Pipeline project. In addition to cost (transmission lines alone are expected to cost more than \$60 billion) and regulatory hurdles, such as coordinating electricity pricing regimes, the plan faces security risks.<sup>11</sup> Wind farms and solar arrays would be easy targets for AQIM, which could profit from the publicity generated by attacks on these structures.

#### *Mining*

Gold mining is intensifying throughout the Sahara and Sahel. Mauritania has succeeded in attracting active gold mining operations, particularly in the relatively ungoverned central region of the country, an area that the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs has highlighted as a security risk. Burkina Faso has also witnessed an increase in gold mining along the border with Niger, near the area where several

**“Further enhancement of GPS capabilities in the Sahara and Sahel are likely, and AQIM will use these improvements to facilitate its movement around the desert and improve its ability to plan and carry out attacks.”**

diplomats were taken hostage by AQIM in February 2009. Burkina Faso aims to become Africa's fourth-largest gold producer within the next three years, placing it just behind neighbors Mali and Ghana. Algeria is the newest addition to Sahara gold producers with a remote mine located several hundred kilometers to the west of Tamanrasset.

Tenacious Chinese and Indian demand for natural resources is encouraging multinational mining companies to acquire mineral rights in previously unexplored areas. For example, several multinationals are considering investments in northern Mauritania, close to the Moroccan (Western Saharan) border, in an area that has registered AQIM activity in the past two years. In fact, the group of alleged AQIM members who were arrested near Mauritania's Taoudeni basin where Total has begun drilling test wells came from Zouerate in northern Mauritania, near the area where multinationals are considering iron-ore mining operations.<sup>12</sup>

5 Ismael Aidara, “Total reprend en main le bassin de Taoudenni en Mauritanie,” *Les Afriques*, October 16, 2009.

6 Abdoul Karim Kone, “Le Ministre des Mines en visite au Bloc 20 du Bassin de Taoudeni,” *Journal l'Indépendant*, June 1, 2009.

7 “Mauritanie: sept membres présumés d'Al-Qaïda toujours interrogés,” *lakoom-info.com*, October 5, 2009.

8 Benoit Faucon, “Nigeria Militants: Will Attack Trans-Sahara Pipe If Built,” *Dow Jones Newswires*, July 4, 2009.

9 Sebastian Spio-Garbrah, “Nigeria Sliding into Resource Nationalism with New Petroleum Law,” *Business Day*, November 2, 2009.

10 The militarized zone is an area encompassing Algeria's most important hydrocarbon assets and requires a special permit issued by the security services to visit. The zone has a strong military presence and is patrolled by four-wheel drive vehicles on the ground and by helicopter in the air.

11 Charu Malik, “Enolcon on the role of trust in Desertec Industrial Initiative,” *CSP Today*, August 26, 2009.

12 Aidara.



### Population Growth and Urbanization

In addition to the increasing presence of foreign firms in the Sahara and Sahel and the spread of energy-related infrastructure throughout the region, the Sahara and Sahel states' populations are booming, more than doubling in the last 50 years.<sup>13</sup> The Sahel's and Sahara's few cities are bearing the brunt of this population growth, as persistent drought and government settlement plans decrease the overall proportion of the population that still maintains a nomadic lifestyle. It is expected that by 2025, 43% of the Sahel population will be urban.<sup>14</sup> There are few statistics for most Sahel and Sahara cities, but even the few existing data points tell an urgent story. The Nigerien town of Agadez had approximately 10,000 residents at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The population gradually grew to 50,000 by 1988. By 2001, there were 78,000 people living in Agadez and by 2005 the number had risen another 100,000, not including a "transient" population of approximately 20,000 people. The famous uranium mining town to the north, Arlit, has undergone similar growth. In 1988, Arlit had a population of 35,000.<sup>15</sup> The 2001 census shows that the population grew to 69,000, which rose to 80,000 by 2006. Tamanrasset is also indicative of the region's urbanization and population growth; it had only between 4,000-5,000 residents in the 1960s. Today, the town has grown to more than 100,000 people.<sup>16</sup> Kidal in Mali is similar. In 1998, Kidal had a population of slightly more than 13,000. In 2007, it was approximately 24,000.<sup>17</sup> According to one study, Kidal's and Agadez's annual population growth rates are between 10-20%. Arlit's growth rate is more than 20%.<sup>18</sup>

13 M. R. Mulford, "Government, Population and Ecology in the Sahel: A Study in Disaster," 1994.

14 This is based on a report released by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature in 1992.

15 Y. Decroix and Martin J. de Saint, "Seroprevalence of HIV Infection in Arlit, Northern Niger," *Transactions of the Royal Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene* 84:1 (1990).

16 Geoff D. Porter, "Curtailling Illicit and Terrorist Activity in Algeria's Tamanrasset," *CTC Sentinel* 1:9 (2008).

17 "Plan de Securite Alimentaire Commune Urbaine de Kidal," Commissariat à la Sécurité Alimentaire and USAID-Mali, July 2007.

18 L. Olsson and L. Eklundh et al., "A Recent Greening of the Sahel - Trends, Patterns and Potential Causes," *Journal of Arid Environment* 63:3 (2005): pp. 556-566.

It is almost impossible for economic growth rates to keep pace with the increasing size of the population. As a consequence, it is likely that the cities' residents will be compelled to seek livelihoods outside formal sectors, with implications for the growth of the informal economy and illicit activities. Population growth on top of informal economies also strains municipal budgets because they do not benefit from increased tax revenue. Moreover, this challenges the municipal governments' ability to expand urban infrastructure to meet the needs of the growing population. Residents strive to meet their own housing needs

**"Foreign diplomats and foreign installations in the Sahara and Sahel have been at the top of AQIM's target list, as exemplified by the capture of two Canadian diplomats in December 2008 and the suicide attack on the French Embassy in August 2009."**

by building shantytowns and other clandestine housing. There has often been a strong correlation between the presence of shantytowns and terrorism and criminality, although the causal nature of the correlation is disputable. Likewise, the rapid population growth rates in Sahel and Saharan cities introduce concerns about food and water security, increasing the likelihood of heightened social tensions and potential for unrest ensuing from struggles for access and control of resources.

### Increasing Mobility and Communication

Not only will populations in the region be larger and test the limits of urban infrastructure in the coming years, but they will also be more mobile and interconnected. The introduction of handheld Global Positioning System (GPS) devices has made it easier for people to navigate the Sahara and Sahel

without relying on the few paved roads and established tracks even if they have limited familiarity with the terrain. For example, GPS has made it feasible for people not from the region to drive from Kidal in Mali to northern Algeria without ever traveling on an established road.<sup>19</sup> In the last year, accessing GPS has become even easier. In October 2008, Algerie Telecom launched GPS service for much of southern Algeria, both via conventional GPS devices, but also for GPS-compatible cell phones.<sup>20</sup> In addition to facilitating peoples' ability to move along unconventional routes, GPS also allows people to remain out of contact with populated areas for longer periods of time by being able to locate pre-established caches of weapons, food and fuel.<sup>21</sup> Cell phone coverage is also penetrating deeper into the Sahara and Sahel, increasing communication with other regions; this was historically limited to fixed lines or satellite phones.<sup>22</sup> Now it is possible to reach Europe and the United States from the heart of the Sahara and Sahel. Cell phone penetration rates as well as the expansion of internet-enabled cell phones in the Sahara and Sahel is likely to continue for the foreseeable future, meaning that Saharans will be able to communicate with increasing fluidity with friends and family, colleagues and collaborators elsewhere in the world.

### Growing Target Opportunities for AQIM

While AQIM activity in the Sahara and Sahel has increased in recent years, in the comparative context it is still extremely limited. One of the factors restraining the pace of AQIM's operations in the Sahara and Sahel has been the lack of targets and the inability of AQIM members who are not from the region to move throughout the desert.<sup>23</sup> Also, there are few Europeans and Americans in the desert, both of which are preferred AQIM targets either for ideological reasons or for the practical motive that they are likely to

19 Mulford.

20 "Une filiale d'Algérie Télécom dévoile de nouveaux services GPS et VoIP," *Magharebia*, August 4, 2008.

21 "Des 'trafiquants' arrêtés au Nord du Mali," *Journal Tabali*, September 16, 2009.

22 Paul Hunter, "130 Days in Captivity; Canadian Diplomat Reveals Details of his Harrowing Time in Captivity," CBC News, September 9, 2009.

23 Salima Tlemcani, "Révélations sur une organisation en déroute," *El-Watan*, August 1, 2007.



afford higher ransoms. Moreover, while AQIM member Mokhtar Belmokhtar's marriage into local families allowed him to be a capable leader in the Sahara, he seems to be increasingly less motivated by Salafi-jihadi ideology and now harbors more conventionally criminal, for-profit aspirations.<sup>24</sup> His apparently ideologically rigorous counterpart, Yahya Djouadi, who was ostensibly appointed by AQIM leader Abdelmalek Droukdel to replace the wavering Belmokhtar, is from northern Algeria and is at pains to make alliances in the Sahara. As a result, he has been unable to carry out effective campaigns there.

Yet the increased presence of foreign energy and mining firms throughout the Sahara and Sahel in the coming years means that AQIM will have a richer target set. AQIM, in both the Sahara and in northern Algeria, has targeted foreign companies in addition to representatives of state security services. There are abundant examples of AQIM attacks against foreign firms in northern Algeria, where they have been historically more prevalent. Attacks against Brown and Root-Condor, a KBR subsidiary, in 2006 and subsequent attacks against Canadian engineering, procurement and construction firm SNC-Lavalin in 2008 and again in 2009 have made foreign firms extremely aware of the threat AQIM poses to their operations and personnel.<sup>25</sup> Foreigners in general are privileged AQIM targets. While not an exhaustive list, the kidnapping of German tourists in 2003 in Tamanrasset, the murder of French tourists in Aleg in Mauritania in 2006, the kidnapping of Austrian tourists in Tunisia who were transported to Mali in 2008, and the capture of Swiss and French tourists in 2009 are all indicative of this trend. Likewise, foreign diplomats and foreign installations in the Sahara and Sahel have been at the top of AQIM's target list, as exemplified by the capture of two Canadian diplomats in December 2008 and the suicide attack on the French Embassy in August 2009.

Even if firms minimize their expatriate personnel, AQIM has demonstrated that it views nationals working for foreign firms as legitimate targets. In addition, AQIM is likely benefiting from advances in navigation and communication technology. Further enhancement of GPS capabilities in the Sahara and Sahel are likely, and AQIM will use these improvements to facilitate movement around the desert and improve its ability to plan and carry out attacks. Similarly, cell phone penetration will make it easier for AQIM cells to communicate with one another and foster technology transfers such as how to build improvised explosive devices.

Aid that the U.S. and France are providing Sahel and Sahara states to enhance their counterterrorism capabilities is unlikely to allow local governments to keep pace with AQIM's increasing target opportunities and capabilities. France has provided military assistance to President Mohamed Abdel Aziz's government in Mauritania and the United States has given military aid to Mali, but the aid is calibrated to the threat that AQIM poses at the present and not its likely capabilities in the coming years. Algeria has refused U.S. counterterrorism assistance, even though the AQIM threat there is perhaps most acute and is likely to grow most significantly in light of Algeria's aggressive push to expand oil and gas exploration and production in the southwest of the country.

These factors mean that in the coming years, new investments in the Sahara and Sahel will come under increasing danger from criminals and bandits, along with fighters belonging to AQIM. Unfortunately, it does not appear that governments in the region are currently prepared to neutralize this growing threat.

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## Hizb Allah's Domestic Containment and Regional Expansion Strategies

By Benedetta Berti

DURING THE PAST few months, Lebanese Hizb Allah has pursued two strategic priorities. Within Lebanon, the organization is focused on preserving the internal balance of power and preventing the international community from increasing its role within the country. At the same time, while concentrating its efforts on protecting its political and military power internally, Hizb Allah is investing significant political capital to improve its regional role and status, both politically and operationally.

This article will first analyze Hizb Allah's domestic strategy, showing how the organization is stifling the actions of the newly elected government while also curtailing the influence of the international community within Lebanon. It will then examine Hizb Allah's regional strategy, which includes becoming increasingly confrontational with "moderate" governments in the region, particularly Egypt.

### Hizb Allah's Domestic Strategy

In the aftermath of its electoral defeat in Lebanon's June 2009 parliamentary elections, Hizb Allah has been relying on its popular legitimacy and political power to limit the elected government's freedom of political maneuver. Specifically, the Hizb Allah-led March 8 coalition stalled the formation of the new executive cabinet for months by demanding to be rewarded with at least 11 of the 30 available cabinet seats. If granted, this request would have both conferred the organization veto power over any substantial national reform that could threaten the group, and at the same time it would have weakened the elected majority.<sup>1</sup> In the end, the two camps agreed to form a "unity cabinet" composed of 15 members of the March 14 coalition, 10 members from the Hizb Allah-led opposition, and five independent candidates appointed by President Michel Suleiman.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Geoffrey York, "Diplomat Robert Fowler's Kidnaper has Powerful Terrorist Links," *Globe and Mail*, October 13, 2009.

<sup>25</sup> Bertrand Marotte, "SNC-Lavalin Won't Evacuate Workers," *Globe and Mail*, October 22, 2009.

<sup>1</sup> "PM Al-Sanyurah After Cairo Meeting: Third Blocking Experience Failed," Lebanese National News Agency, June 14, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> "Without National Consensus New Cabinet Will

This agreement is still considered favorable to Hizb Allah, which counts on the “independent” candidates to prevent the elected government from implementing reforms that would hurt the organization’s strategic interests.

At the core of the ongoing crisis lies Hizb Allah’s strategic interest in preserving its freedom of action and preventing the March 14 forces from addressing the issue of Hizb Allah’s military apparatus and their *de facto* control of southern

**“Hizb Allah has become increasingly confrontational with the so-called ‘moderate Arab regimes,’ including Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states.”**

Lebanon. It has been a strategic imperative of the Lebanese-Shi’a organization to rely on all available tools—political and military—to avoid this occurrence. This was exemplified by Hizb Allah’s violent reaction in May 2008 to the attempts by the cabinet of former Prime Minister Fouad Siniora to remove Hizb Allah sympathizer Wafic Shkeir from his post as security chief at Hariri International Airport, and to shut down the organization’s communications network.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, in

Achieve Nothing,” Agence France-Presse, November 11, 2009.

3 The May 2008 events are the culmination of a political crisis that began in December 2006 between the ruling coalition and the Hizb Allah-led opposition. The predicament was over the failure to create a national unity government between the majority coalition (the March 14 Alliance) and the opposition parties. This lack of agreement led to the resignation of the opposition ministers from Prime Minister Siniora’s cabinet in November 2006 and to a long-standing boycott, causing the *de facto* paralysis of the Lebanese government and deeply impairing its decision-making process. The crisis escalated from peaceful protests to armed confrontation in May 2008, after the March 14 government attempted to remove Hizb Allah sympathizer Wafic Shkeir from his post as security chief at the Hariri International Airport and to shut down the organization’s communications network. Hizb Allah viewed these acts as a war declaration and on May 7, 2008 the organization sent gunmen to seize parts of West Beirut—the Sunni area where most supporters of

the aftermath of the June 2009 elections, Hizb Allah’s parliamentary leader, Mohammed Raad, warned that a political crisis would explode if the government insisted on disarming Hizb Allah.<sup>4</sup>

At the same time, while actively engaging the domestic political system to maintain the current balance of power, Hizb Allah has been increasingly active in attempting to curtail the influence of the international community within Lebanon, directing its efforts against the recently established UN Special Tribunal for Lebanon, and the locally-deployed forces of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). From the outset, Hizb Allah has been adamantly against the idea of creating an international tribunal to investigate political killings in Lebanon. Even after the actual establishment of the UN Special Tribunal for Lebanon tasked with investigating the 2005 attack that killed former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, the group has maintained a non-cooperative position. Furthermore, during the past six months, Hizb Allah’s animosity and rhetoric against the tribunal have increased even further.

First, the group reacted angrily to accusations advanced by the German newspaper *Der Spiegel* directly implicating them in the Hariri assassination.<sup>5</sup> Following the release of the report, Hizb Allah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah stated that the article was an “act of Israeli provocation against the Shiites.”<sup>6</sup> Second, in the aftermath of the elections, Hizb Allah adopted a progressively more hostile tone against the tribunal. On July 28, 2009, the organization threatened the court, stating:

Hizb Allah is a steady mountain and the international tribunal will not shake one hair on its

Rafiq Hariri’s Future Movement are located. The seizure of Beirut led to a series of bloody engagements between the different sectarian groups, leading to the worst episodes of violence since the civil war. See “Hezbollah Militants Take Over West Beirut,” CNN, May 9, 2008.

4 David Schenker, “Now Comes the Hard Part,” *Weekly Standard*, June 22, 2009.

5 Erich Follath, “New Evidence Points to Hezbollah in Hariri Murder,” *Der Spiegel*, May 23, 2009.

6 “Hezbollah Chief Describes Report of Der Spiegel as Israeli Provocation Against Shiites,” Xinhua, May 26, 2009.

head. All those standing behind [these accusations] will regret [it] and let everyone know that what we did on May 7, 2008 [the organization’s armed “takeover” of West Beirut] was just a shaking of a hand. We are powerful to the point where we can turn ten tables and not just one.<sup>7</sup>

Concurrently, Hizb Allah has also increased its opposition against the UNIFIL presence in Lebanon, especially after Hizb Allah sympathizers and UNIFIL troops clashed on July 18, 2009.<sup>8</sup> On that occasion, UNIFIL troops were prevented from inspecting a village in southern Lebanon where a Hizb Allah weapons depot had just exploded.<sup>9</sup> During the confrontation with the local Hizb Allah militia, 14 UN peacekeepers were injured.<sup>10</sup> Hizb Allah initially blamed the peacekeepers’ alleged lack of coordination with the Lebanese army for the incident—a claim quickly denied by the international troops.<sup>11</sup> Subsequently, Hizb Allah changed its position and directed its accusations against the UNIFIL presence. Lebanese Hizb Allah Member of Parliament Nawaf Mousawi said, “The UN has no sovereignty over south Lebanon because the area is not under international mandate.” Mousawi blamed the international troops for “overstepping their boundaries,” reminding them that UNIFIL’s role should be solely “limited to supporting the Lebanese army when the army requests support, and they cannot move according to the request of the Israeli side.”<sup>12</sup> In this sense, in the past few months Hizb Allah has actively engaged in trying to limit UNIFIL’s freedom of action and its role within southern Lebanon.

7 “March 14 Sources to Rai Aam: Nasrallah Put Gun Back on the Table,” *al-Rai al-Aam*, July 28, 2009.

8 “South Lebanon Residents Prevent Peacekeepers Searching After Ammunition Explosion,” Xinhua, July 18, 2009.

9 Zeina Karam, “UN Says South Lebanon Weapons Cache a Violation,” Associated Press, July 15, 2009.

10 “14 UN Peacekeepers Injured in Lebanon Protest,” Agence France-Presse, July 18, 2009.

11 “Clashes Between Southerners & UN Forces, A Threat To UNIFIL Role,” *al-Hayat*, July 20, 2009.

12 “Hezbollah Lawmaker Says South Lebanon not Under International Mandate,” Xinhua, July 21, 2009.

### Hizb Allah's Regional Strategy

While the majority of the international media's attention has focused on the domestic aspect of Hizb Allah's political and military strategy, the past few months have also revealed an increased level of international activism for the group, both through direct operational involvement as well as through political and diplomatic interventions.

First, Hizb Allah has become increasingly confrontational with the so-called "moderate Arab regimes," including Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states. Specifically, Hizb Allah relied on the last Israeli military operation in Gaza in December 2008 to January 2009 to criticize and chastise some of these countries for their lack of support for Hamas. For instance, Hizb Allah's head of international relations, Nawaf Mousawi, repeatedly lamented the "suspicious silence" of Arab leaders, while Secretary General Nasrallah conducted a personal campaign against Egypt. Similarly, the Lebanese-Shi'a organization also used the Gaza war to issue declarations casting doubts on the role of Saudi Arabia and its peace proposal. Hizb Allah Shaykh Qassem strengthened this thesis by stating "we believe that the mentioned initiative [the Saudi initiative] was buried after the Gaza war," adding that "as long as Israel exists, it will pose a threat to the entire region."<sup>13</sup>

In particular, Hizb Allah is engaged in an open confrontation with Egypt. At first, Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah harshly criticized Egypt for not opening the Rafah Crossing during the last Gaza war, and called the Egyptian people to protest and rise up against their government: "Let the Egyptian people take to the streets in the millions. Can the Egyptian police kill millions of Egyptians? No, they cannot."<sup>14</sup> The organization's stance, backed by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad,<sup>15</sup> was rebutted by the Egyptian media, which reacted by accusing the Shi'a group of being an Iranian proxy tasked

with weakening Egypt's position as a broker in the Arab-Israeli conflict.<sup>16</sup> Within Lebanon, members of the ruling March 14 Coalition, including Christian Lebanese Forces chief Samir Geagea, criticized Hizb Allah for its escalation of words against Egypt and accused the group of attempting to topple the Arab regime.<sup>17</sup>

In the months following the end of hostilities in Gaza, tensions between Hizb Allah and Egypt did not deescalate; on the contrary, the crisis only deepened as Egypt uncovered a Hizb Allah network operating clandestinely within

**"Although the actual extent of Hizb Allah's operations in Egypt remains unknown, it is clear that the group had an organized logistic, and at least to some extent operational, presence in the country—and that it is now employing these external cells in a way that signals a trend of increased regional activism."**

the country. In April 2009, Egypt announced the arrests of approximately 50 Egyptians, Palestinians and Lebanese militants, all accused of having ties with Hamas and Hizb Allah, and of operating on behalf of the latter organization.<sup>18</sup> Egypt's state prosecutor also indicted the individuals for plotting to carry out terrorist operations within Egypt.<sup>19</sup> As the investigations unfolded, Egyptian cabinet minister Mufed Shehab disclosed that the local authorities had seized explosive belts from the cell, and

said that the group had been monitoring tourist resorts in the Sinai, an area with a high concentration of international and Israeli tourists.<sup>20</sup> Eventually, 26 individuals, including two Lebanese and five Palestinian nationals, were brought to trial and formally charged with spying for Hizb Allah. They are currently awaiting sentencing by the State Security Emergency Court.<sup>21</sup> The state prosecutor indicated that 18 of the captured militants were providing Hizb Allah logistics information regarding both tourist resorts in the Sinai, as well as Suez Canal schedules, and that Hizb Allah had transferred more than \$38,000 to the local cell, tasking them to acquire explosives.<sup>22</sup>

Hizb Allah first reacted by denying any interest in carrying out operations within Egypt,<sup>23</sup> and accused Cairo of fabricating accusations in retaliation for the organization's criticisms of Egypt's stance on Gaza.<sup>24</sup> By April 10, 2009, however, Secretary General Nasrallah admitted that at least one of the arrested militants—Sami Hani Shehab, the alleged ringleader—was a Hizb Allah agent dispatched to Egypt to aid Hamas in smuggling weapons through the Egyptian-Palestinian border. He added: "if aiding the Palestinians is a crime, then I am guilty and proud of it."<sup>25</sup> During a later rally in Beirut, Nasrallah also stated:

We have not formed an organization in Egypt and we do not plan to form an organization in Egypt. We did not target Egypt, its security, order, and stability, and we are not concerned with its internal affairs. We work for a very clear cause; namely, supporting our Palestinian brothers.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Husayn Asi, "Shaykh Qassem Affirms Arab Peace Initiative was Buried," al-Manar, January 22, 2009.

<sup>14</sup> "Hezbollah Calls for Urgent Steps on Gaza Among Arab Leaders," Xinhua, December 27, 2008; Al-Manar, December 28, 2008.

<sup>15</sup> "Lebanon: Hezbollah Leader Criticizes Egyptian Stand on Gaza," al-Manar, January 14, 2009.

<sup>16</sup> "Egyptian FM Slams Hezbollah Chief Over Protest Calls," Agence France-Presse, December 29, 2008.

<sup>17</sup> "Lebanese Pro-Gov't Leaders Criticize Verbal Attack On Egypt," Xinhua, December 30, 2008.

<sup>18</sup> "Egypt Arrests 50 for Alleged Extremist Ties," Associated Press, April 7, 2009.

<sup>19</sup> "Egypt Accuses Hezbollah of Plotting Attacks," al-Arabiya, April 7, 2009.

<sup>20</sup> Maggie Michael, "Egypt: Hezbollah Cell Plotted Against Israelis," Associated Press, April 12, 2009.

<sup>21</sup> Sarah El Deeb, "Egypt Refers 26 Hezbollah Suspects to Trial," Associated Press, July 26, 2009.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Muhammad Shumaysani, "Egypt and the Aggressive Claims Against Hezbollah," al-Manar, April 9, 2009.

<sup>24</sup> Muhammad Abdallah, "The Egyptian Government and the Hostile Accusations Against Hezbollah," al-Manar, April 8, 2009.

<sup>25</sup> "Lebanese Hezbollah Chief Denies Plotting Attacks Against Egypt," Xinhua, April 10, 2009.

<sup>26</sup> "Lebanese Hezbollah Did Not Target Egyptian Security, Stability," al-Manar, May 2, 2009.



Within Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood was one of the few local political forces that stood up to defend Hizb Allah, stating that the government's indictment was a political move to discredit the group.<sup>27</sup> The head of the Brotherhood's political bureau, Isam al-Aryan, asserted that the accusations were part of Egypt's plan to pressure Hizb Allah

**“Hizb Allah is strengthening the ‘resistance bloc’ while discrediting the ‘moderate’ regimes and alienating them from their populations.”**

to change its hostile position toward the Egyptian government.<sup>28</sup> Palestinian political forces were divided in reacting to Egypt's accusations. Fatah-aligned forces condemned Hizb Allah's actions, whereas Hamas rebutted the charges and added that the accusations were part of an intimidation campaign against Hamas.<sup>29</sup>

Although the actual extent of Hizb Allah's operations in Egypt remains unknown, it is clear that the group had an organized logistic, and at least to some extent operational, presence in the country—and that it is now employing the organization's external cells in a way that signals a trend of increased regional activism. In fact, although it is not possible to assess to what extent Hizb Allah already had an organized clandestine presence in the region, the group is now increasingly visible and active, shifting from dormant to operational. In fact, this rise in external operational activities and regional visibility has not been limited to Egypt. According to Kuwait's *al-Watan*, for example, Hizb Allah has also been increasingly active within Kuwait, where the local branch of the organization is currently trying to enhance its political

role and increase its internal strength.<sup>30</sup> Even more recently, the UAE-based newspaper *al-Ittihad* claimed that three Hizb Allah militants were killed during a confrontation between the Yemeni government and Houthis rebels in the Saada region, in northern Yemen. If the report is true, it raises questions over the extent of Hizb Allah's presence in that country.<sup>31</sup>

In this sense, both the ongoing political tensions between Egypt and Hizb Allah, and the organization's enhanced regional presence, can be read as part of a larger Iranian plan to expand its regional influence by discrediting and questioning the legitimacy of other prominent regional players, such as Egypt. With that objective, the organization is actively struggling, both politically and operationally, to further redefine the regional alliances. Hizb Allah is strengthening the “resistance bloc” while discrediting the “moderate” regimes and alienating them from their populations.

Secretary General Nasrallah articulated Hizb Allah's regional strategy in detail during the September 18, 2009 al-Quds (Jerusalem) day celebrations. On that occasion, he stressed the fact that the organization sees the region as divided between “allies” and “enemies” of the “resistance,” and emphasized the need to change the status quo. Referring to the moderate Arab regimes, he said that “we have to replace the regimes in the Arab countries with other regimes that are convinced of war in order to send their armies to war.”<sup>32</sup> Recognizing that this option may not be realistic in the short-term, he stressed the need to boost popular resistance throughout the region and added that the entire Middle East should follow the steps of Iran and Syria. In that regard, he also added: “I know Iran and I know its wise, courageous, and skilful administrator. I know its leaders and its people and its stand. I tell you that this Iran will never abandon the peoples of this region or the resistance movements in this region.”<sup>33</sup>

30 Abdullah al-Najjar, “Hezbollah and the Incursion Into Kuwait,” *al-Watan*, October 9, 2009.

31 “Three Explosives Experts from Hezbollah Killed in Saada,” *al-Ittihad*, October 17, 2009.

32 “Nasrallah Commemorates Al-Quds Day,” speech transcript, September 18, 2009.

33 Ibid.

Nasrallah's message was directed both toward the people living under regimes deemed by the organization as “corrupt” by encouraging them to embrace the “resistance,” as well as toward the Lebanese people by urging them to shift their regional political alliances. In this sense, the secretary general also stated: “Iran wants to include Lebanon in the Syrian-Iranian axis by arming the army.”<sup>34</sup>

### Conclusion

Hizb Allah's internal strategy of containing both its political enemies and the international community has been matched by an increased interest in adopting a more visible regional role and in boosting the “axis of resistance” as a viable regional political project.

At this point, it is still rather difficult—given the paucity of reliable information available—to estimate the extent and impact of Hizb Allah's operational presence outside of Lebanon. Nevertheless, the fact that the group has been remarkably more visible in the region, more active in supporting local “resistance” cells, and more vocal against the “Arab moderate regimes” may signal that the group is permanently seeking a more prominent and powerful regional role. This could represent both a political and a security challenge for the group's enemies in the Arab world, as well as for Israel.

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27 Durayd al-Bayk, “Egypt to Prove ‘Hezbollah Plot,’” *Gulf News*, April 9, 2009.

28 Ibid.

29 “Hamas MP Says Egypt's ‘Campaign’ Against Hezbollah Targets Hamas,” Quds Press, April 15, 2009.

34 “Nasrallah Says Iran Is Willing To Arm The Lebanese Army,” *al-Manar*, May 29, 2009.



## Jihadist Radicalization and the 2004 Madrid Bombing Network

By Fernando Reinares

ON MARCH 11, 2004, terrorists launched a series of coordinated bombings against Madrid's commuter train system, killing 191 people. The terrorists who planned and perpetrated the attacks belonged to multiple different groups and organizations, but they shared a common jihadist ideology. The attacks have often been labeled a case of "homegrown" terrorism, a result of extremist attitudes caused by the war in Iraq, or the product of a self-radicalized cell. Yet a closer look at the individuals involved in the network behind the attack reveals a more complicated picture.

It is important to examine the network responsible for the March 2004 Madrid plot in more detail, since the incident constituted the most lethal terrorist attack in a Western country since the September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States. Analysis of the network will help provide a deeper understanding of terrorist radicalization, a process that continues to occur within open societies. Indeed, the individuals responsible for the March 2004 Madrid bombings did not become prone to terrorism at the same place, the same time or through the same processes. A detailed examination of the case, based on official information extracted from judicial documents, reveals interesting variations in the radicalization process.<sup>1</sup>

### The Madrid Bombing Network

The terrorist network responsible for the March 11, 2004 attacks in Madrid was assembled between March 2002 and November 2003. During this time period, the desire and then the decision to execute a terrorist attack in Spain

caused the coalescing of four relatively small clusters of individuals. Two of the clusters were interconnected because they evolved from the remnants of an al-Qa`ida cell established in Spain during the mid-1990s. This cell was led by Syrian-born Imad Eddin Barakat Yarkas, better known as Abu Dahdah, and was partially dismantled during the months following 9/11.<sup>2</sup>

A third cluster of individuals who eventually became part of the network was linked to the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group (GICM), which established structures across Western Europe in the 1990s, particularly in France and Belgium. The fourth cluster was initially composed of a criminal gang active throughout Spain and specialized in illicit trafficking of drugs and stolen vehicles.

There are 27 individuals about whom there is currently both empirical data and legal grounds to implicate in the preparation or execution of the Madrid bombings.<sup>3</sup> Of the 27, 13 have already been convicted in Spain, two in Morocco and one in Italy, all on charges of involvement in the March 2004 plot. Seven individuals committed suicide in an apartment safe house in the Spanish town of Leganés on April 3, 2004. The four remaining individuals are known fugitives, although one of them was handed over to the Moroccan authorities

after being arrested in Syria in 2007 and still awaits trial in Morocco.

All 27 individuals were men, born between 1960 and 1983. More than half were between 23 and 33 years of age at the time of the bombings. Most were native Moroccans, except for three Algerians, one Egyptian, one Tunisian and one Lebanese.<sup>4</sup> None were originally from Spain.

At the time of the attacks, 24 of the 27 were living in Spain, a country in which the vast majority of Muslims are of Moroccan descent.<sup>5</sup> Two of the group lived in the Belgian city of Brussels and one in the northern Italian city of Milan. Most of the men were economic immigrants and included both legal and

**"The Madrid attacks were not a case of 'homegrown terrorism' in the strictest sense of the word. Among the network's members were individuals linked to international terrorist groups such as the GICM and al-Qa`ida."**

illegal foreign residents. Many of the men were single, although a significant number were married and a few had children. Although the sociological profile of the group was diverse, they were generally poorly educated and did not have high-paying jobs.

2 This al-Qa`ida cell in Spain was detected by the police at the end of 1994. Among its founding members were Anwar Adnan Mohamed Saleh, also known as Chej Salah, who moved from Madrid to Peshawar in October 1995 and Mustafa Setmariam Nasar, better known as Abu Mus`ab al-Suri, who relocated to London four months before and then settled close to Usama bin Ladin in Afghanistan. This al-Qa`ida cell was connected to the Hamburg cell that spawned the 9/11 attacks. Abu Dahdah was in contact with Mohammed Atta since the early 1990s. The former and 17 other individuals were convicted of terrorism related charges by the National Court on September 26, 2005.

3 The number of people directly or indirectly involved in the attacks may exceed 27. It would be beyond the deontological boundaries of academic work, obliged to respect fundamental human rights and rule of law guarantees when researching and publishing on terrorism, to include persons who were detained following the attacks but never charged, or prosecuted but absolved of all charges. Others, condemned for dealing with stolen explosives that ended up in the hands of the terrorists, did not exactly belong to the jihadist network as such and therefore are excluded from this analysis.

4 The Moroccans include: Hassan el-Haski, Youssef Belhadj, Mohamed Larbi ben Sellam, Jamal Ahmidan, Said Berraj, Mohamed Afalah, Jamal Zougam, Othman el-Gnaoui, Fouad el-Morabit Anghar, Saed el-Harrak, Mohamed Bouharrat, Rachid Aglif, Abdelmajid Bouchar, Rifaat Anouar Asrih, Abdenabi Kounjaa, Mohamed Oulad Akcha, Rachid Oulad Akcha, Abdelilah Hriz, Mohamed Belhadj, Hamid Ahmidan and Hicham Ahmidan. The Algerians include: Allekema Lamari, Daoud Ouh-nane and Nasreddine Bousbaa. The Egyptian is Rabei Osman el-Sayed Ahmed. The Tunisian is Serhane ben Abdelmajid Fakheth. The Lebanese is Mahmoud Slimane Aoun.

5 Most of those part of the bombing network who lived in Spain resided in or near Madrid.

1 Unless marked otherwise, all of the facts in this article are drawn from the criminal proceedings for the 2004 Madrid train bombings, which in Spain accumulate 241 tomes and 30 separate volumes with previously secret records, containing a total of 93,226 paged files. In addition, judicial documentation includes records from the central investigative judge responsible for the case and sentences both at the National Court and the Supreme Court. Also, from related criminal proceedings and sentences delivered in Milano and Sale.

### A Case of Homegrown Terrorism?

At least four of the 27 individuals part of the Madrid bombing network clearly internalized an extremist ideology outside of Spain. These four include Hassan el-Haski, Youssef Belhadj, Rabei Osman and Allekema Lamari. Hassan el-Haski was already a leading member of the GICM by March 11, 2004, although it is not clear whether he was radicalized in Morocco or in Belgium. Youssef Belhadj, on the other hand, was clearly radicalized in Belgium, where he joined the GICM. Rabei Osman allegedly espoused jihadism while in Egypt, where he was born; while in Egypt he joined Egyptian Islamic Jihad, which merged with al-Qa`ida in 2001. Allekema Lamari was a member of the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) by 1996, even before arriving in Spain from Algeria. As for Daoud Oughnane, who was also born in Algeria, it is not clear whether he acquired a violent interpretation of Islam prior to his arrival in Spain, which occurred in the 1990s.

Yet the 2004 Madrid terrorist attacks have often been labeled a case of “homegrown” terrorism because at least 21 of the 27 individuals part of the network adopted a jihadist ideology while in Spain, although a few of them were certainly influenced during temporary stays abroad. Nevertheless, the Madrid attacks were not a case of “homegrown terrorism” in the strictest sense of the word.<sup>6</sup> Among the network’s members were individuals linked to international terrorist groups such as the GICM and al-Qa`ida. Two of the group members who radicalized abroad, Rabei Osman and Youssef Belhadj, acted as external radicalizing agents for members of the network living in or near Madrid, who as a result of Osman’s and Belhadj’s propaganda decided to become involved in the plot. In addition, none of the 27 members of

the network were born or naturalized in Spain or in any other European Union member-state. Most of the network arrived in Spain between 1990-2001 as first generation immigrants in their late teens and mid-20s. Moreover, while in Spain, their daily routines placed them in constant interaction with people of the same background.

Only one member of the group, Rachid Aglif, could be considered a “homegrown” terrorist. Aglif settled in Spain with his father and other close

**“The network’s members who radicalized before 9/11 were the main actors in the March 2004 attacks, and they were also critical radicalizing agents for the rest of the group.”**

Moroccan relatives when he was only 10-years-old. Moreover, he attended public schools in the Madrid region, and started work at his family shop when he was 16-years-old.

### Iraq and the Radicalization Timeline

Another assumption about the March 2004 Madrid bombing network is that they were mostly radicalized as a result of the 2003 invasion of Iraq.<sup>7</sup> Only 12 to 13 individuals part of the network internalized a jihadist ideology after the invasion of Iraq. At least five of those who radicalized into terrorism after the invasion of Iraq belonged to a band of criminals under the leadership of Jamal Ahmidan, or “The Chinese.” Another four from the group of 12 to 13 were slightly connected to past members of the Abu Dahdah al-Qa`ida cell in Spain.

On the other hand, 13 to 14 of the network’s members adopted a violent ideology before the invasion of Iraq. Of these, five to six individuals were radicalized after the 9/11 attacks and the subsequent military intervention in Afghanistan. Eight became prone to terrorism before the 9/11 attacks.<sup>8</sup> The network’s members who radicalized before 9/11 were the main actors in the March 2004 attacks, and they were also critical radicalizing agents for the rest of the group.

### How They Became Jihadists

Members of the network who radicalized before 9/11 and were in contact with Abu Dahdah’s al-Qa`ida cell attended Madrid’s main Islamic worship sites, such as the Abu Bakr mosque and the M-30 mosque. It was at these locations that they were spotted as possible followers.<sup>9</sup> In addition to being indoctrinated at these locations, where extremist materials were disseminated, they were then usually invited to countryside gatherings next to the Alberche River, near the rural town of Navalcarnero. At these informal countryside gatherings, recreational activities were mixed with proselytizing sessions on religion, jihad and conflicts involving large Muslim communities, such as in Bosnia. Individuals who attended these meetings were persuaded

6 A delimitation of the phenomenon useful for an informed discussion on this and other cases can be found in Evan F. Kohlmann, “Homegrown Terrorists: Theory and Cases in the War on Terror’s Newest Front,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* 618:1 (2008): pp. 95-109. The network responsible for the commuter train attacks of 3/11, however, accommodates better to the concept of a grassroots jihadist network as proposed by Javier Jordán, Fernando M. Mañas and Nicola Horsburgh in “Strengths and Weaknesses of Grass-root Jihadist Networks: The Madrid Bombings,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 31:1 (2008): pp. 17-39.

7 Two individuals belonging to the Madrid bombing network, Mohammed Larbi ben Sellam and Abdelilah Hriz, subsequently engaged, from Spain as well as Turkey and Syria, in activities aimed at facilitating travel to Iraq for Muslim extremists who radicalized in Europe and wanted to join the terrorist campaign of al-Qa`ida-related organizations in the country. One of the fugitives, Mohamed Belhadj, was arrested in Syria in 2007 and another, Mohammed Afalah, actually made it to Iraq, where he allegedly perpetrated a suicide attack in May 2005.

8 Four of the eight include Hassan el-Haski, Rabei Osman, Youssef Belhadj, and Allekema Lamari, all of whom were part of jihadist groups before the 9/11 attacks. Three of the eight who became prone to terrorism before the 9/11 attacks were already part of Abu Dahdah’s al-Qa`ida cell. They included Jamal Zougam, Said Berraj and Sarhane ben Abdelmajid Fakhet, “The Tunisian,” who radicalized while in contact with a prominent member of the cell, Amer Azizi. Amer Azizi, also known as Othman al-Andalusi, was identified by the Spanish national police when conducting investigations on the Abu Dahdah cell to which he belonged. Before 9/11, Azizi was active in radicalizing Maghrebi immigrants and sending them to training camps in Afghanistan, where he personally traveled, probably more than once. He was one of the charismatic figures whose impact as a radicalizing agent in Spain was accurately stressed by Rogelio Alonso in “Procesos de radicalización de los terroristas yihadistas en España,” Real Instituto Elcano, ARI 31/2007.

9 It is worth mentioning that before he was radicalized into a jihadist ideology, Serhane ben Abdelmajid Fakhet had joined Tablighi Jama`at. It was also inside this group, for instance, that Amer Azizi met for the first time Moustapha Maymouni, the man who initiated the formation of the Madrid terrorist network in 2002 but was arrested during a trip to Morocco in 2003.

to donate money to the mujahidin fighting in these conflicts, as well as invited to undertake military training at jihadist camps in Afghanistan.<sup>10</sup> Eventually, select individuals were chosen and then secluded to private residences where they were indoctrinated. Indoctrination processes included watching videos of fighting in Bosnia and Chechnya, and listening to taped sermons from radical preachers such as Abu Qatada.

Weeks after the 9/11 attacks, however, Spanish authorities dismantled Abu Dahdah's al-Qa`ida cell, and the countryside gatherings on the riverbank ceased. Meetings became more discreet and behind closed doors in city flats and storefronts, such as a barber's shop located in a quarter of Madrid where Maghrebi and other immigrant populations are concentrated.

During this period after 9/11, some individuals part of the network were socialized into jihadism by influential people traveling to Spain from abroad, such as Mimoum Belhadj and his brother Youssef Belhadj, who were already members of the GICM. Network member Abdelmajid Bouchar, for example, was radicalized in this way. Others who later became part of the 2004 Madrid bombing network were observed in 2002 outside worship sites in Madrid where they were subjected to proselytizing by Rabei Osman. Fouad el-Morabit Amghar is an example of a network member radicalized by this method. Others were radicalized while serving time in Spanish prisons, such as Mohamed Bouharrat.<sup>11</sup>

10 Said Berraj, for example, was on his way to Afghanistan in 2001 when he was arrested in Turkey. Said Berraj was traveling in the company of three other followers of Abu Dahdah, more concretely Amer Azizi himself, Salaheddin Benyaich, also known as Abu Muhgen, and Lahcen Ikassrien, who was captured by the U.S. military in Afghanistan following 9/11, imprisoned for a few years at Guantanamo Bay and finally extradited to Spain in 2005, where he was released.

11 Rachid Aglif, Otman el-Gnaoui and Mahmoud Slimane Aoun, all of whom radicalized into violence after March 2003, also served time in prison during the 1990s, but apparently it did not result in the adoption of extremist attitudes.

### Was the Internet a Significant Radicalization Tool?

The internet was not a radicalization factor for individuals who adopted a jihadist ideology before the 9/11 attacks. It was a limited factor among those who adopted a jihadist ideology between 9/11 and February 2003. As for those who radicalized into violence after the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the internet appears to have been a greater factor in their radicalization process.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, those who radicalized after

### **“Indeed, 25% of the 27 individuals part of the network had at least one other relative involved in the plot.”**

the 2003 invasion of Iraq also did so more rapidly than the others, although with varying degrees of intensity.<sup>13</sup> Judicial documentation from the March 2004 terrorist case provides valuable information about the internet sites visited by the members of the network.

Files recovered from a hard drive and USB devices found in the debris of the Leganés apartment explosion are revealing.<sup>14</sup> Before 9/11, leading members of the Madrid terrorist network paid close attention to the texts of Abdullah Azzam and Abu Qatada. Between 9/11 and February 2003, members visited websites such as [www.jihad.net](http://www.jihad.net) and downloaded writings in

12 A longitudinal perspective on radicalization among those involved in the Madrid bombing network indicates the growing importance of the internet, although not to the point of self-radicalization or self-recruitment. For a broader discussion based on other examples, see Peter Newmann, *Joining Al-Qaeda. Jihadist Recruitment in Europe* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2008), pp. 53-62.

13 Interestingly, a gradual sense of progressive involvement, usually considered a consistent quality among those becoming terrorists, seems to be absent for some latecomers in the Madrid bombing network. For an insightful perspective on these issues, see John Horgan, “From Profiles to Pathways and Roots to Routes: Perspectives from Psychology on Radicalization into Terrorism,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* 618:1 (2008): pp. 80-93.

14 The files on the drives were created between July 1997 and February 2004.

Arabic by Sayyid Qutb. During this time period, members also downloaded the audiovisual productions of al-Sahab, al-Qa`ida's media production house. After March 2003, members visited sites such as [www.tawhed.ws](http://www.tawhed.ws), [www.almaqdese.com](http://www.almaqdese.com) and [www.alsunnah.info](http://www.alsunnah.info); they focused on the texts of Abu Qatada, Ibn Taymiyya, Ayman al-Zawahiri, Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, Nasir bin Hamad al-Fahd, Abdul Munim Mustafa Halima, Hamid al-Ali and Muhammad Fizazi.

### The Role of Affective Ties

Other significant radicalizing factors were affective ties between individuals. Pre-existing ties contributed not only to the adoption of jihadism, but to individuals' actual inclusion in the terrorist network. These relationships were usually based on kinship, friendship and neighborhood links. For example, 11 of the 27 individuals were born in Tetouan and Tangiers in Morocco. Nevertheless, this fact is not a definitive causal relationship since more than 20% of the tens of thousands of Moroccans living in Madrid are from these two cities.<sup>15</sup> There are, however, cases where network members were active within the same city quarter, connections that date back to childhood and youth years. This is true of Jamal Zougam and Said Berraj with respect to Tangiers. In these circumstances, affective ties based on neighborhood become much more significant, particularly if they are recurrent during occasional stays in the same city of origin.

Regardless, it is not easy to establish the location of birth or residence as a causal factor since other variables are often involved. Jamal Ahmidan, Hicham Ahmidan and Hamid Ahmidan all come from Tetouan, yet they all share family bonds. Mohamed and Rachif Oulad Akcha, both members of the terrorist network and both born in Tetouan, are brothers. Indeed, 25% of the 27 individuals part of the network had at least one other relative involved in the plot.

As for friendship ties, it is difficult to make what would otherwise be an important analytical distinction

15 Bernabé López García and Mohamed Berriane eds., *Atlas de la Inmigración Marroquí en España* (Madrid: Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, 2005), pp. 499-500.



between relationships existing before individual socialization into jihadism and those forged within the four group clusters after extremist ideas were adopted but prior to the formation of a terrorist network. Nevertheless, in regard to individuals engaged in criminal activities headed by “The Chinese,” loyalty to the criminal gang and above all to its leader appears to have been the key motivating factor for involvement in the 2004 Madrid bombing plot.

### Conclusion

The 2004 Madrid train bombing network should not be viewed as a case of “homegrown” terrorism, or as a case of a “homegrown” network of al-Qa`ida sympathizers. The network did not lack international connections with prominent global terrorism figures and entities, and its members, with one exception, were not disaffected people born or raised in Spain or in any other Western European country.

As for the network’s radicalization processes, individuals who radicalized into jihadism after the 2003 invasion of Iraq are a relative majority, and this issue appears to be a significant factor in their radicalization. Members who adopted jihadism before the 2003 invasion of Iraq were influenced by Islamic injustice frames, such as with respect to major conflicts involving Muslim communities. These include the conflict in Bosnia before 9/11, or Afghanistan immediately afterward; the invasion of Iraq also likely contributed. As for members who acquired a jihadist ideology before 9/11, their radicalization processes were slower, taking from months to years. A possible explanation is that the radicalizing agents needed more time to build trust among subjects for indoctrination, and they may have deliberately created various radicalization stages to advance a recruit’s socialization into jihadism.

It was in mosques, worship sites, countryside gatherings and private residences where most of the members of the Madrid bombing network adopted extremist views. A few adopted a violent conception of Islam while in prison. The internet was clearly relevant as a radicalization tool, especially among those who were radicalized after 2003, but it was more

importantly a complement to face-to-face interactions.

Nearly six years after the Madrid bombings, many of these same causal factors still exist. The country continues to host worship sites where a number of foreign radical Salafists preach. Prisons remain locations where jihadist radicalization occurs. The internet has only grown as an important radicalization tool, and extremist documents can now be found in Spanish. Iraq has become another radicalizing factor, joining other conflicts involving Muslims such as Afghanistan, Somalia and even North Africa.

There is also a new potential radicalizing factor to be considered. Spain is now experiencing the emergence of a second generation of descendants from immigrant Muslim parents coming of age. Although this second generation, as a large aggregate, is not yet old enough for university, schools may gradually become locations where peer groups of second generation adolescents are eventually affected by a lack of effective integration into Spanish society and a concomitant absence of identification with the country from where their parents came. This could be conducive to global jihadism as an alternative cognitive frame of reference among the several thousand pupils currently between 14 and 17 years of age. Failure to prevent and counter jihadist radicalization could finally result in real cases of “homegrown” terrorism in Spain, similar to incidents in other Western European countries.

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## The Past and Future of Deobandi Islam

By Luv Puri

AS THE BARACK OBAMA administration considers modifying the current U.S. strategy in Afghanistan, it is useful to understand the social, religious and historical forces that influence Pashtun society. Pashtuns form the single largest community in Afghanistan, consisting of approximately 38% of the population.<sup>1</sup> Pakistan also hosts a significant Pashtun population, primarily in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), where they make up 78% of the population, and in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), where they make up 99% of the population.<sup>2</sup> Overall, 15% of Pakistanis are Pashtun.<sup>3</sup>

When developing a strategy involving the Pashtun community in Afghanistan and Pakistan, it is relevant to understand the Deobandi school of Islam. Deobandi Islam is the most popular form of pedagogy in the Pashtun belt on both sides of the Durand Line that separates Afghanistan and Pakistan. Moreover, prominent Afghan and Pakistani Taliban leaders have studied in Deobandi seminaries. This article explains the history of Deobandi Islam, shows how Deobandi Islam in Afghanistan and Pakistan has been influenced by Saudi Wahhabism, and finally looks at the role of Deoband today.

### History of Deobandi Islam

The Deobandi school of Islam was founded in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was part of a series of revivalist movements that were sweeping British India during the time. After the 1857 revolt against the British colonialists, Muslims in British India were the primary targets during the

1 See the UNHCR Assessment for Pashtuns in Afghanistan, located at [www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,MAR,,AFG,4562d8cf2,469f3a5112,0.html](http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,MAR,,AFG,4562d8cf2,469f3a5112,0.html).

2 “Population by Mother Tongue,” 2006 Pakistan Census Report, Pakistan’s Ministry of Economic Affairs and Statistics, available at [www.statpak.gov.pk/depts/pcso/statistics/other\\_tables/pop\\_by\\_mother\\_tongue.pdf](http://www.statpak.gov.pk/depts/pcso/statistics/other_tables/pop_by_mother_tongue.pdf).

3 Ibid. Other Pakistani provinces host sizeable Pashtun populations: Baluchistan Province (29.84% Pashtun), Sindh Province (4.19% Pashtun), Punjab Province (1.16% Pashtun), and Islamabad (9.52% Pashtun).



ensuing British crackdown because the revolt was fought under the leadership of the Muslim Mughal emperor. As part of the crackdown, the British occupied religious sites in Delhi, the capital of the Mughal Empire for several centuries. Muslim clerics in Delhi enjoyed the patronage of the Mughals, but this changed once the British occupied the city. The last Mughal emperor was exiled to Rangoon, Burma, and the British occupied the mosques in Delhi. This caused many *ulama* (religious clerics) to migrate to various locations, such as the northern Indian town of Deoband, to preserve their religious life and culture. Deoband was a natural choice because it was a center of Muslim culture, and many families from Deoband had served in the Mughal Empire. Moreover, it was only 90 miles away from the former Mughal capital of Delhi.

In 1867, Darul Uloom was founded in the town of Deoband as one of the first major seminaries to impart training in Deobandi Islam. In addition to being close to other Muslim cultural centers in northern India, the founders of Darul Uloom believed that the decision to establish the seminary had divine sanction. By 1967, Darul Uloom had graduated 3,795 students from present-day India, 3,191 from Pakistan and present-day Bangladesh, and 431 from multiple other countries, such as Afghanistan, China and Malaysia.<sup>4</sup> By 1967, there were 8,934 Deobandi schools worldwide.<sup>5</sup>

When the school was founded, Deobandi scholars were cognizant of the religious diversity within India, and they made an effort to engage in dialogue with India's non-Muslim population. In 1875 and 1876, for example, Deobandi scholars participated in religious debates with Christian and Hindu scholars.<sup>6</sup> They jointly fought with non-Muslims against the British during India's colonial resistance, and they also participated in non-violent struggles against colonial rule.<sup>7</sup> Even the town of Deoband itself is

located in Saharanpur district of Uttar Pradesh, where Hindus form 62.7% of the total population of approximately 452,000 people.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, during the initial period of Darul Uloom's establishment, Hindus reportedly contributed to its operating expenses.<sup>9</sup>

The Deobandi movement became the most popular school of Islamic thought among Pashtuns living on both sides of the Durand Line. Many prominent Pashtun community leaders established Deobandi seminaries in these areas. Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, a prominent Pashtun leader, was instrumental in establishing several schools based on Deobandi curriculum in the Pashtun belt.<sup>10</sup> In other parts of British India, however, they faced competition from other Islamic schools, primarily Barelvi Islam. Barelvi Islam, for example, remains the most popular Islamic school in what is now Pakistan's Punjab Province.

As in other South Asian schools of Islam, such as Barelvi and Ahl-e-Hadith, Deobandi places particular emphasis on the importance of religious education. It is committed to a "correct" interpretation of Shari'a (Islamic law). Deobandi students become *alim* (religious scholars) after an eight-year-long course in various aspects of Islamic learning such as logic, Islamic jurisprudence, the Qur'an, the history of literature and the hadiths. Deobandi scholars are opposed to certain Barelvi practices, such as visiting the tombs of saints. Their opposition to these practices, however, is not as rigid when compared to Ahl-e-Hadith, which follows a more narrow interpretation of Islam. In that respect, Ahl-e-Hadith is similar to Saudi Wahhabism, although it remains of South Asian origin.

### The Rise of Deoband in Afghanistan and Pakistan

In 1947, British India was partitioned into Pakistan (which included present-day Bangladesh) and India. The separation caused the migration of many leading Deobandi scholars to Pakistan. This included Mufti Mahmood, the father of Maulana Fazl-ur-Rehman, the current president of a faction of Jamiat-i-Ulama-i-Islam. Moreover, Mufti Mahmood, an ethnic Pashtun, became the chief minister of Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province in 1972 for nine months.

The looming war against the Soviet Union only led to a rise in enrollment in Deobandi seminaries in the Pashtun areas of Pakistan. During the late 1970s, for example, Deobandi seminaries in the Pashtun belt received state patronage. According to a World Bank report, enrollment in Deobandi seminaries increased after 1979, coinciding with the start of the Afghan jihad against

### "Saudi Arabia infused Deobandi seminaries with Wahhabi ideology. The Saudis targeted Deobandi Islam because it was the most popular Islamic school in the Pashtun belt."

the Soviets.<sup>11</sup> Pashtuns played a major role in the Afghan jihad, and a large number of these fighters were drawn from Deobandi seminaries. In addition to American and Saudi money helping to support the war against the Soviets in Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia infused Deobandi seminaries with Wahhabi ideology. The Saudis targeted Deobandi Islam because it was the most popular Islamic school in the Pashtun belt. Ahl-e-Hadith, for example, had a weak presence in the Pashtun belt, and Wahhabis considered certain Barelvi practices—such as visiting mausoleums—as anti-Islamic

4 Barbara Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

5 Ibid., p. 136.

6 Ibid., p. 221.

7 This information is drawn from the website of Darul Uloom, located at [www.darululoom-deoband.com/english/aboutdarululoom/freedom\\_fight.htm](http://www.darululoom-deoband.com/english/aboutdarululoom/freedom_fight.htm).

8 "Profile of Saharanpur District," Planning Commission, Government of India, available at [www.planning-commission.gov.in/reports/sereport/ser/stgpnt/stgpnt\\_ch2.pdf](http://www.planning-commission.gov.in/reports/sereport/ser/stgpnt/stgpnt_ch2.pdf).

9 Personal interview, Maulana Adil Siddiqui, Darul Uloom, Deoband, India, July 2009.

10 Sayed Wiqar Ali Shah, "Abdul Gaffar Khan," Quaid-i-Azam University in Islamabad, undated, available at [www.baachakhantrust.org/AbdulGaffarKhan.pdf](http://www.baachakhantrust.org/AbdulGaffarKhan.pdf).

11 Tahir Andrabi, Jishnu Das, Asim Ijaz Khwaja and Tristan Zajonc, *Religious School Enrollment in Pakistan: A Look at the Data* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

and heretical. Some Pakistan-based scholars, such as Akbar Zaidi, have argued that Deobandi Islam in Pakistan and Afghanistan has moved away from its roots in India due to a number of factors, one of which is the influence of Saudi Wahhabism.<sup>12</sup>

The Soviet Union eventually withdrew from Afghanistan, and Deobandi became the religious base for much of the Taliban movement that ruled Afghanistan until 2001. Many Taliban leaders and fighters studied in Deobandi seminaries, many of which were influenced by Wahhabism. Mullah Omar, the head of the Taliban, is the product of a Deobandi seminary. Moreover, the top bracket of the current Taliban leadership in Afghanistan and Pakistan studied in Deobandi seminaries on both sides of the Durand Line. Even Hakimullah Mehsud, the new commander of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, studied in a Deobandi seminary in Hangu District of the North-West Frontier Province, although he left his studies early and seems heavily influenced by Salafism.<sup>13</sup>

#### Deoband Today

The bifurcation of British India in 1947 severed the institutional links between Deobandi seminaries in Afghanistan and Pakistan and in India. It became difficult for Deobandi scholars in the Pashtun belt to engage in dialogue with their counterparts in Deoband. Since 1947, occasional meetings have occurred, but they have required the approval of both the Pakistani and Indian governments.

As a result, today the town of Deoband, once the leading center of Islamic learning in South Asia, has become a location restricted to Indian Muslims. The representation of students from foreign countries is currently at an all-time low. Since the 1990s, the Indian government has pursued an extremely strict educational visa policy, primarily due to fears that foreign students might

radicalize young Indian Muslims.<sup>14</sup> India's Muslim community numbers approximately 160 million, making it the third largest Muslim country in the world after Indonesia and Pakistan.<sup>15</sup>

Scholars at Deoband have taken a hard line in regard to terrorism. In early 2008, Darul Uloom declared a battle against the forces of religious extremism. On February 25, 2008, Darul Uloom hosted a conference of Islamic scholars at Deoband to debate the issue of terrorism, and the scholars unanimously passed a *fatwa* (religious edict) condemning all acts of terrorism in the name of Islam.<sup>16</sup> The declaration stated that Islam has taught its followers to treat all mankind with equality, mercy, tolerance and justice. It said that Islam sternly condemns all types of oppression, violence and terrorism.<sup>17</sup> According to Darul Uloom's Maulana Adil Sidique,

We thought that the time has come for the institution to come out with a strong position against terrorism and take a stand against the men who wrongfully invoke the name of Deobandi Islam for committing acts of terror.<sup>18</sup>

More recently, on November 3, 2009, Jamiat-i-Ulama-i-Hind, a group of Deobandis dedicated to the rights of Muslims in India, met at Deoband and condemned suicide bombings and attacks targeting innocent civilians. They also argued that efforts to make "jihad" synonymous with terrorism are incorrect. "Jihad is basically a constructive phenomenon," they said. "Misrepresentation of jihad should be avoided."<sup>19</sup>

14 Personal interview, Maulana Abdul Latif, Darul Uloom Waqf, Deoband, India, July 2009.

15 According to the U.S.-based Pew Research Center in 2009, India is estimated to have the third largest Muslim population of more than 160 million people. Indonesia has more than 200 million Muslims and Pakistan has nearly 175 million.

16 To read the full declaration, visit [www.darululoom-deoband.com/english/news/shownews.php?id=5](http://www.darululoom-deoband.com/english/news/shownews.php?id=5).

17 Ibid.

18 Personal interview, Maulana Adil Sidique, Darul Uloom, Deoband, India, July 2009.

19 "Jamiat Upholds Fatwa Against Vande Mataram," *Times of India*, November 4, 2009.

Scholars at Deoband are divided over the issue of whether to grant visas to Pashtuns from Afghanistan and Pakistan. Maulana Abdul Latif, who has taught at Darul Uloom Waqf for 26-years, strongly opposes any move to allow students from Afghanistan and Pakistan; he believes that they could radicalize Indian Muslim students.<sup>20</sup> Maulana Adil Sidiqui disagrees, and thinks that educating students from Afghanistan and Pakistan at Deoband would have a sobering influence on the Muslim populations in these countries. According to Sidiqui, Pashtun graduates would be the "true" ambassadors of a Deobandi education that emphasizes research, contextual interpretation of various religious edicts, debate, engagement and co-existence with non-Muslims.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, he added that Deoband can become a constructive platform to debate political, religious, economic and social challenges confronting Muslims in Afghanistan, Pakistan and India, and simultaneously engage in dialogue with non-Muslims.<sup>22</sup>

Currently, seven students from Afghanistan are studying at Darul Uloom in Deoband. There are no students from Pakistan's Pashtun belt. According to 24-year-old Matiullah, an Afghan student at the school, his religious training at Darul Uloom has equipped him with the skills to guide the Muslim community and confront elements that misinterpret Deobandi Islam.<sup>23</sup> Matiullah believes that the Indian government should issue more visas to students from Afghanistan.

Nevertheless, even if the Indian government were to grant more visas to Afghans and Pakistanis to study at Deoband, it is questionable whether these seminaries could accommodate an influx of new students. The small group of Afghan students currently studying at Deoband, for example, lives in a single, small room. The living conditions of the educational facility are a stark reminder of the plight of Indian Muslims, which is in contrast to the rising social and

20 Personal interview, Maulana Abdul Latif, Darul Uloom Waqf, Deoband, India, July 2009.

21 Personal interview, Maulana Adil Sidiqui, Darul Uloom, Deoband, India, July 2009.

22 Ibid.

23 Personal interview, Matiullah, Darul Uloom, Deoband, India, July 2009.

12 Akbar Zaidi, "The Ulema, Deoband and the (Many) Talibans - Historical Scholarship Ignores the Discontinuities and Breaks That Have Taken Place in the Traditions of Pakistani Islam," *Economic and Political Weekly* [Mumbai], May 9-15, 2009.

13 Ayaz Mir, "Chevalier Of The Undead," *Outlook India*, November 2, 2009. For a profile of Hakimullah Mehsud, see Mukhtar A. Khan, "A Profile of the TTP's New Leader: Hakimullah Mehsud," *CTC Sentinel* 2:10 (2009).

economic profile of India's middle-class urban youth, who are becoming leading members of the global economy equipped with marketable skills.

These are just some of the pressing concerns for students at religious seminaries such as Darul Uloom.<sup>24</sup> One of the main reasons for the shortage of funds is that they depend on donations from the Muslim community. Darul Uloom and Darul Uloom Waqf, the two leading seminaries in Deoband, do not receive financial help from the Indian government as they believe this would dilute their institutional autonomy and control. Some scholars want administrative reforms at these seminaries, striking the right balance between institutional autonomy and accountability. They suggest having flexibility in curriculum by offering technical courses and English-language training.<sup>25</sup>

This ongoing ideological battle between scholars at Deoband and the forces of Islamist extremism will shape events in South Asia, particularly in the Pashtun belt, for years to come. The outcome is nothing less than the legacy of Deobandi Islam.

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## Maintaining the Message: How Jihadists Have Adapted to Web Disruptions

By Manuel R. Torres Soriano

SINCE THE SEPTEMBER 11 attacks on the United States, the internet has become a hostile domain for jihadists.<sup>1</sup> The internet is increasingly monitored by government and non-government entities that seek to disrupt jihadist communications and reduce the presence of jihadist material on the web. Jihadists have been forced to adapt to this mounting pressure by copying the practices of internet "pirates" who distribute illegal materials such as copyrighted music, movies, software and illicit pornography. These practices have allowed jihadists to continue their communications and propaganda activities. Today, jihadists have been inspired by websites of the most diverse character. Their goals are to enhance the visual appearance and accessibility of their content, and improve website security and reliability.

This article explains how jihadists have adapted to attempts to shut down their websites and disrupt their communications. Jihadists are increasingly using file-hosting websites and web forum software to sustain the accessibility of their content on the internet. These new technologies have allowed them to avoid some of the main weaknesses that have affected their operations in recent years.

### The Search for a More Efficient and Stable Presence on the Web

In the early years of jihadist online activity, many groups created their own websites with the intention to broadcast announcements, videos of

their operations, speeches by their leaders, and other material of interest.<sup>2</sup> Jihadist groups, however, had a difficult time maintaining a steady online presence.<sup>3</sup> Various governments and other actors concentrated their efforts on shutting down a small group of websites connected to major terrorist organizations, such as al-Qa`ida. Al-Qa`ida's official alneda.com website, for example, suffered incessant harassment after the September 11 attacks, and the site was taken offline. Major terrorist groups were forced to continuously establish new domain names and use different web hosts to keep their sites operational.<sup>4</sup>

This practice, however, also became unsustainable. Changing web hosting companies required payment, which was a problem for jihadist groups since it created a paper trail. To bypass this vulnerability, jihadist users paid with stolen credit cards. Again, however, this process was not practical; their website account only remained active until the fraud was discovered by the credit card's legitimate owner, and the hosting company would then shut down the account. The jihadists were then forced to start the process all over again.

To avoid these limitations, jihadists tried hosting their websites using free web hosting companies such as Geocities.com and Yahoo.com. These companies offered free web hosting to any user who supplied a valid e-mail address. Yet since the services were free, the companies only offered a limited amount of monthly data transfer. As a result, when a jihadist website became popular, it exceeded its data transfer quota and the site was subsequently suspended. Jihadist websites, in effect, died from success.

<sup>24</sup> Personal interviews, students at Darul Uloom and Darul Uloom Waqf, Deoband, India, July 2009.

<sup>25</sup> Some of the Deobandi scholars who argued for institutional reforms did not want to be quoted.

<sup>1</sup> This article uses the term "jihadists" to include individuals physically participating in the activities of terrorist groups, but also to individuals sympathetic to the goals of jihadist terrorist groups. This latter category of "jihadists" may have no physical connection to terrorist groups, and may have no intention of physically taking part in terrorist attacks or plots, but still participates in web forums promoting jihadist interests. These users help to spread jihadist propaganda and maintain jihadist websites, which makes them relevant for this article's discussion.

<sup>2</sup> Evan Kohlmann, "The Real Online Terrorist Threat," *Foreign Affairs* 85:5 (2006).

<sup>3</sup> There is not an exact number of websites of jihadist inspiration. The estimates tend to oscillate between 5,000 websites, suggested by the Israeli professor Gabriel Weimann, and 50,000 according to the data of an automatic inquiry completed by a group of researchers at the Artificial Intelligence Laboratory of the University of Arizona under the project "Dark Web Terrorism Research."

<sup>4</sup> Brynjar Lia, "Al-Qaeda Online: Understanding Jihadist Internet Infrastructure," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, January 1, 2006.



Another strategy was to hack into legitimate websites (generally of U.S.-based institutions and companies, due to their performance reliability) and store jihadist-related content on their servers. This “parasite” strategy was useful when the goal was the rapid dissemination of files among a radicalized audience, who would be notified of the files’ location via e-mail lists. The content could then be downloaded and multiplied on hundreds of new websites before the hacking action was discovered and removed. Yet this process was progressively abandoned due to the fact that website security has increased dramatically over time, and businesses have become more aware of the threat. Continuing the hacking process in this environment requires more advanced technology capabilities, which most jihadists simply do not possess.

As a result, the strategy of creating official websites was largely discarded and an alternative strategy adopted.<sup>5</sup> To overcome these obstacles, jihadists evolved toward a more horizontal and diffuse presence on the internet based on the labor of a network of volunteers. The foundation of this strategy is internet web forums.<sup>6</sup> Forums present a series of useful functions for jihadist groups. Moreover, they have become essential tools in the diffusion of propaganda. The forums are especially attractive due to the ease in which they can be designed and managed.<sup>7</sup>

The main utility of web forums is that they promote the spontaneous participation of their members, which has resulted in sites that “live and breathe” and therefore are constantly growing and changing. Administering

the web forums can be carried out simultaneously by a limitless number of users, who can participate in the administration anonymously. In fact, many site administrators have no connection to actual members of jihadist groups and achieved their positions

**“The jihadist internet infrastructure is increasingly fed by an ‘army’ of heterogeneous radicalized youth who employ various technologies to further their common cause.”**

by being “promoted” through the web forum’s roster. They achieve promotion by their commitment to write new articles, post new material, and assist with other web forum tasks. This system helps to maintain the reliability of web administration; even if senior members of the website disappear or are killed, users located all over the world can continue to keep the site operational.

**Data Transfer Challenges**

Use of web forums, however, did not solve the jihadists’ data transfer restrictions. Jihadist propaganda has increasingly taken the form of sophisticated video and audio statements, which require massive storage and transfer capabilities. Jihadist web forums are not capable of covering these needs. Yet, what has made these forums so successful is that they have avoided storing much of this material on their servers. Instead, to avoid data restrictions, jihadists have resorted to the same free website services used by people to illegally download movies, music, software and illegal pornography: document-sharing and file-hosting websites.<sup>8</sup>

The process works as follows. When a new official jihadist group notice, video or audio file is released, multiple users upload the file to various file-hosting websites, creating hundreds

of URL links to where that file can be downloaded. A large list of links, or virtual library of hyperlinks, is then posted on multiple jihadist web forums. Once a user reads the post, they then duplicate the forum posting on another forum. This practice is welcomed and encouraged by the rest of the readers, which allows the original user to gain prestige and continue ascending in the forum’s “roster.”

Many of the hyperlinks expire quickly or are disabled by the file-hosting company, yet the sheer number of hyperlinks and uploads makes it difficult to completely eliminate access to the file. Moreover, jihadist website users pursue a number of practices—copied from music, movie and software pirates—to increase the duration of time that the file stays accessible. First of all, they rename the file so that it has a neutral denomination or without any apparent meaning so that hosting companies cannot identify the content of the file unless they actually view it. Second, they encrypt the file and archive with a password that is communicated on jihadist forums. By locking the file with a password, the file-hosting company’s administrators tasked with searching for such content cannot access the file themselves to review whether it is illicit. Moreover, the process can be relatively anonymous. For example, users can store the file on a portable USB device and upload it directly to the file-hosting website at an internet cafe.

The advantages of using this distribution platform exceed those found in peer-to-peer (P2P) file-sharing programs such as Kazaa, EMule and related software. By using file upload websites, rather than P2P file-sharing programs, jihadists are able to remain more anonymous. Using P2P services, for example, involves transferring a file from one computer hard drive to another. This method can be more easily traced, as seen when authorities investigate individuals involved in sharing child pornography or copyrighted music. Moreover, access to a P2P program—such as Kazaa—is difficult for jihadists who use internet cafes, as those cafes often use security software that disallows users the ability to download and install P2P software. Jihadists, for example, regularly frequent internet cafes because many do not own their own computer, or they use

5 This is not true of all terrorist groups. Some terrorist groups not directly linked to the global jihad (for example, organizations part of the Iraqi insurgency) have been able to keep their official websites active. This is primarily because it is only the most prominent terrorist groups that consistently have their websites targeted for disruption.

6 Hanna Rogan, “Jihadism Online - A Study of How al-Qaida and Radical Islamist Groups Use the Internet for Terrorist Purposes,” Norwegian Defence Research Establishment, 2006.

7 For example, the majority of jihadist forums employ the popular commercial software VBulletin. This software is easier to manage than any other website design program, offering an ample variety of options to personalize the forum.

8 Janko Roettgers, “Piracy Beyond P2P: One-Click Hosters,” NewTeeVee, June 17, 2007. These services include RapidShare, MegaUpload, Ziddu and others.



cafes due to the increased anonymity they offer.<sup>9</sup> These weaknesses explain why P2P software has not been the main distribution platform for jihadist media.

### Conclusion

The internet continues to evolve, and it is allowing global communications to be more effective. Jihadists are constantly innovating and incorporating new technologies useful to the spread of propaganda. Moreover, the jihadist internet infrastructure is increasingly fed by an “army” of heterogeneous radicalized youth who employ various technologies to further their common cause. These youth incorporate their personal experiences—such as their search for friends through social networks to the illegal downloading of software and music—into the jihadist infrastructure, helping to maintain the reliability and sustainability of this radical content.

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## Recent Highlights in Terrorist Activity

October 1, 2009 (GERMANY): German authorities arrested a 24-year-old man on suspicion of preparing explosive devices and posting al-Qa`ida propaganda on the internet. The suspect, identified as Adnan V., is a German and Turkish citizen and was arrested in the Frankfurt area. During two police raids connected to the arrest, a small amount of explosives and a possible detonator were found. Authorities also accuse the man of seeking contact with members or supporters of al-Qa`ida on the internet. – *BBC, October 2; Voice of America, October 2*

October 1, 2009 (SOMALIA): Heavy fighting broke out between rival Islamist factions in the Somali port city of Kismayo. Somali insurgent groups al-Shabab and Hisbul Islamiyya are fighting for control of the key town. – *AFP, September 30*

October 3, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Eight U.S. soldiers were killed during a Taliban attack on their combat outpost in the Kamdesh area of Nuristan Province in eastern Afghanistan. More than 100 Taliban fighters were killed during the ambush. – *Washington Post, October 5; AFP, October 6*

October 3, 2009 (IRAQ): Iraqi security officials announced the arrests of 140 suspected al-Qa`ida militants and other Sunni Arab fighters during a series of raids the past four days in Mosul, Ninawa Province. – *Voice of America, October 3*

October 4, 2009 (GLOBAL): Al-Qa`ida deputy Ayman al-Zawahiri appeared in a new video message vowing to kill more Westerners to avenge “crimes” against Muslims. – *AFP, October 5*

October 4, 2009 (PAKISTAN): The new leader of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Hakimullah Mehsud, met with journalists at an undisclosed location in Pakistan’s northwest. Hakimullah was flanked by Qari Waliur Rahman and Qari Hussain, two other senior Pakistani Taliban militants. Hakimullah promised to avenge the death of Baitullah Mehsud, the former TTP leader who was killed in a U.S. missile strike in August 2009. – *BBC, October 5*

October 5, 2009 (UNITED STATES): The U.S. government will not seek the death penalty in the case of Ahmed Khalafan Ghailani, who is awaiting trial in federal court in New York. Ghailani, an alleged al-Qa`ida member charged with involvement in the 1998 U.S. Embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania, was indicted on a total of 286 charges, along with 224 separate counts of murder—one for each person killed in the embassy attacks. His case is scheduled for September 2010. – *CNN, October 6*

October 5, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber attacked a UN World Food Program office in Islamabad, killing three Pakistanis and an Iraqi national. The bomber was reportedly disguised as a Pakistani security officer. – *The Australian, October 6; Chicago Tribune, October 6*

October 5, 2009 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber detonated explosives in a funeral tent in the town of Haditha in Anbar Province. At least six people were killed. – *Voice of America, October 5*

October 6, 2009 (UNITED STATES): U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder said that the arrests of Najibullah Zazi and two other suspects disrupted “one of the most serious terrorist threats to our country since September 11, 2001.” According to Holder, “This wasn’t merely an ‘aspirational’ plot with no chance of success. This plot was very serious and, had it not been disrupted, it could have resulted in the loss of American lives.” The plot was foiled in September 2009. – *Wall Street Journal, October 6*

October 6, 2009 (IRAQ): A car bomb exploded in a residential area in Amiriyya, Anbar Province. The bomb killed at least 11 people. – *Los Angeles Times, October 7*

October 6, 2009 (PHILIPPINES): Abu Sayyaf Group fighters attacked a major military base in Sulu Province in the southern Philippines. Philippine security forces repulsed the attack, and there were no reports of casualties. U.S. soldiers are stationed at the base. – *Mindanao Examiner, October 7*

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

October 7, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): The Afghan Taliban reportedly released a statement on an Islamist website claiming that the group poses no threat to the West, but will continue to fight foreign forces in Afghanistan. "We had and have no plan of harming countries of the world, including those in Europe...our goal is the independence of the country and the building of an Islamic state," the statement read. The statement comes on the eighth anniversary of the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan that overthrew the Taliban from power. – *Reuters, October 7*

October 7, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): U.S. and Afghan forces killed 17 Taliban fighters and seized 50 tons of opium in Kajaki district of Helmand Province. The drug seizure totaled five million dollars. U.S. and Afghan soldiers also destroyed 30 tons of fertilizer and destroyed a factory for making remote-controlled bombs. – *AFP, October 7*

October 7, 2009 (SOMALIA): Somalia's two main insurgent groups—al-Shabab and Hisbul Islamiyya—agreed to a truce after days of clashes over territory. – *Reuters, October 8*

October 8, 2009 (GLOBAL): Senior al-Qa`ida operative Abu Yahya al-Libi released a new video statement calling for a holy war against the Chinese government for its treatment of Muslim ethnic Uighurs in the country's western Xinjiang Province. Abu Yahya also called on Muslims to launch a media campaign to draw attention to "atheist Chinese colonization." – *Voice of America, October 8; AFP, October 8*

October 8, 2009 (FRANCE): French police arrested two Algerian brothers suspected of having ties to al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). They were arrested in the southeastern French town of Vienne. One of the suspects, Adlene Hicheur, worked on projects for the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) in Switzerland. Investigators allege that Adlene Hicheur, who is a physicist, had been in contact with operatives linked to AQIM and had expressed a "wish, a desire" to carry out a terrorist attack. According to CERN, "his work did not bring him into contact with anything that could be used for terrorism." Adlene Hicheur's brother was later released by authorities

and is not being charged at this time. – *Reuters, October 9; Telegraph, October 9; news.com.au, October 13*

October 8, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber in a vehicle loaded with explosives killed 17 people outside the Indian Embassy in Kabul. According to the Indian foreign secretary, "the suicide bomber came up to the outside perimeter wall of the embassy with a car loaded with explosives obviously with the aim of targeting the embassy." Authorities said that blast walls built since a bombing at the embassy in July 2008 deflected the force of the explosion. – *Guardian, October 8; Bloomberg, October 8*

October 8, 2009 (IRAQ): A roadside bomb wounded three Iraqi soldiers on patrol in Mosul, Ninawa Province. – *Reuters, October 9*

October 8, 2009 (SOMALIA): Somali police warned that Islamist insurgents were planning more suicide attacks on African Union troops using explosives-laden vehicles, including ambulances, police cars and motorcycles. – *AFP, October 8*

October 9, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): According to a *Boston Globe* report, "Nearly all of the insurgents battling US and NATO troops in Afghanistan are not religiously motivated Taliban and Al Qaeda warriors, but a new generation of tribal fighters vying for control of territory, mineral wealth, and smuggling routes, according to summaries of new US intelligence reports." – *Boston Globe, October 9*

October 9, 2009 (IRAQ): A bomb attached to a vehicle killed a Sunni imam and two others near Falluja, Anbar Province. – *Reuters, October 9*

October 9, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A car bomb killed 50 people in Peshawar, the capital of the North-West Frontier Province. The attack targeted the Khyber Bazaar. It was not immediately clear whether a suicide bomber was involved. – *Bloomberg, October 9*

October 9, 2009 (INDONESIA): Indonesian counterterrorism forces killed two brothers wanted for involvement in the July 17, 2009 Jakarta hotel bombings. The men—Syaifudin

Zuhri bin Jaelani and Mohammed Syahrir—were killed during a raid on a militant hideout in Jakarta. Jaelani was educated in Yemen and is accused of recruiting the two suicide bombers who blew themselves up at the JW Marriott and Ritz-Carlton hotels on July 17. Both men were allegedly accomplices of the slain Jemaah Islamiya terrorist leader Noordin Mohamed Top. – *AFP, October 9*

October 10, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Ten Pakistani Taliban militants dressed in army fatigues launched an assault on the military's General Headquarters complex in Rawalpindi. The attack left approximately 23 people dead, including a brigadier, a colonel and nine of the militants. It lasted approximately 22 hours, and at one point the militants held more than 30 people hostage in the facility. – *Washington Post, October 11; New York Times, October 12*

October 11, 2009 (KENYA): Kenyan police arrested an American man in northern Kenya on suspicion that he was trying to enter an area of Somalia controlled by Islamist insurgents. – *Reuters, October 12*

October 12, 2009 (FRANCE): A French court charged Adlene Hicheur with membership in a terrorist group. Hicheur worked at one of the world's leading nuclear research laboratories in Switzerland. He was arrested on October 8 in France. According to *Deutsche Welle*, "US intelligence had intercepted e-mails between [Hicheur] and people tied to the branch of al Qaeda in the Maghreb states of North Africa." The report further stated that Hicheur's terrorist plans "were apparently not connected with his work at the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN)." – *Deutsche Welle, October 13*

October 12, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber in an explosives-laden car attacked a military vehicle in a crowded market in Shangla District of the North-West Frontier Province. The attack killed 41 people. – *New York Times, October 12*

October 13, 2009 (SAUDI ARABIA): Two suspected al-Qa`ida militants and a Saudi police officer were killed at a checkpoint in Saudi Arabia, 75 miles from the city of Jizan. The al-Qa`ida militants, who were both shot

to death, were wearing vests packed with explosives. A third militant was arrested. Saudi Arabia's Interior Ministry later said that the men entered Saudi Arabia from neighboring Yemen to carry out "an imminent criminal act."  
- *BBC, October 13; Bloomberg, October 18*

October 14, 2009 (PHILIPPINES): Suspected Abu Sayyaf Group militants bombed a bridge and a communications relay tower in the southern Philippines.  
- *Mindanao Examiner, October 17*

October 15, 2009 (UNITED STATES): The U.S. Treasury Department froze the assets of Bekkay Harrach, a German man who is thought to be in Afghanistan or Pakistan. Harrach was also added to a United Nations list of people associated with al-Qa`ida, Usama bin Ladin and the Taliban.  
- *Reuters, October 15*

October 15, 2009 (IRAQ): A roadside bomb killed an Iraqi soldier in Baghdad.  
- *Reuters, October 14*

October 15, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Three teams of militants launched a coordinated assault in Lahore, the capital of Punjab Province. The first team attacked the regional headquarters of the Federal Investigation Agency. The second team attacked the Manawan Police Training School. The third team attacked the Elite Police Academy. The combined assaults killed more than 30 people.  
- *BBC, October 15*

October 15, 2009 (TURKEY): Turkey's state-run news agency announced that Turkish security forces detained 32 suspected al-Qa`ida members believed to have been plotting attacks on NATO, U.S. and Israeli targets in the country. Some of the men were possibly trained in al-Qa`ida camps in Afghanistan.  
- *Reuters, October 15*

October 15, 2009 (LIBYA): The Libyan government released 88 repentant Islamic militants, some of whom belonged to the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, according to a government-funded human rights organization.  
- *AP, October 15*

October 16, 2009 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber killed nine people after attacking a Sunni mosque in Ninawa Province.  
- *Reuters, October 16*

October 16, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Two suicide attacks ripped through a police compound in Peshawar, the capital of the North-West Frontier Province. Thirteen people were killed. The attack reportedly involved a female suicide bomber on a motorbike and another suicide bomber in a vehicle. According to Agence France-Presse, "It was only the second suicide bomb attack by a woman in Pakistan."  
- *AFP, October 16*

October 17, 2009 (IRAQ): A roadside bomb exploded next to an Iraqi Army patrol, killing four soldiers. The attack occurred near Falluja, Anbar Province.  
- *Reuters, October 17*

October 17, 2009 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber in a truck blew up a bridge in Ramadi, Anbar Province.  
- *Reuters, October 17*

October 17, 2009 (IRAQ): Gunmen opened fire on an Iraqi police checkpoint in Mosul, Ninawa Province. A child was killed and five civilians wounded.  
- *Reuters, October 18*

October 17, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Pakistan's military launched a major offensive in South Waziristan Agency, the stronghold of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan.  
- *Bloomberg, October 18*

October 17, 2009 (YEMEN): Yemen's state security court began trial for seven suspected al-Qa`ida members. The defendants are accused of forming an armed group to carry out criminal acts and target foreign tourists and Western interests in Yemen, in addition to targeting the government and security forces.  
- *Saba, October 17*

October 17, 2009 (PHILIPPINES): Suspected Abu Sayyaf Group militants partially blew up a bridge in Sulu Province in the southern Philippines.  
- *Mindanao Examiner, October 17*

October 18, 2009 (IRAQ): A car bomb killed five people in northern Baghdad's Adhamiyya district.  
- *Reuters, October 18*

October 18, 2009 (IRAQ): A bomb attached to a motorcycle killed three people in northern Baghdad's Adhamiyya district.  
- *Reuters, October 18*

October 18, 2009 (IRAN): A suicide bomber killed 15 members of Iran's elite Revolutionary Guard Corps and more than 20 tribal leaders in the southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchistan. As many as 42 people may have been killed by the blast. Nourali Shoushtari, the deputy commander of the Guard's ground forces, was among those killed. The incident marked the deadliest attack against Iran's Islamic regime in more than two decades. Jundallah, a Pakistan-based Sunni militant group, was blamed for the bombing.  
- *Washington Post, October 19; Australian Broadcasting Corporation, October 21*

October 19, 2009 (THAILAND): A bomb exploded in a busy market in Yala Province, injuring 24 people.  
- *UPI, October 19*

October 20, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Two near-simultaneous suicide bombings struck the International Islamic University in Islamabad, killing five people. An academic building and a women's cafeteria were targeted.  
- *Los Angeles Times, October 21*

October 20, 2009 (MALI): The United States is preparing to provide Mali's army with military equipment to help the North African state fight against al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb. The equipment includes trucks, advanced communication devices and clothing.  
- *BBC, October 20*

October 21, 2009 (UNITED STATES): Authorities arrested Tarek Mehanna on charges of conspiracy to provide material support to terrorists. Mehanna, a 27-year-old pharmacist living with his parents in the Boston suburbs, allegedly conspired to attack civilians at a shopping mall, U.S. soldiers overseas, and two members in the federal government's executive branch. According to the *New York Times*, "The complaint filed on Wednesday also states that Mr. Mehanna and his associates traveled to Pakistan, Iraq, Syria and Yemen, seeking training from terrorist groups to fight against American soldiers. But the groups rejected them." Mehanna is a U.S. citizen.  
- *New York Times, October 21*



October 21, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suspected U.S. unmanned aerial vehicle killed a top al-Qa`ida explosives expert in North Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. The operative, identified as Abu Ayyub al-Masri, was reportedly a member of al-Qa`ida's military committee. – *The Australian*, October 23

October 21, 2009 (SOMALIA): Fighting erupted between two Somali Islamist insurgent groups in the southern port town of Kismayo. Fighters from al-Shabab and Hisbul Islamiyya clashed, although the number of casualties was not clear. It marked the second time in October that the two groups fought over Kismayo. The latest incident shattered an October 7 truce between the groups. – *AFP*, October 21

October 22, 2009 (IRAQ): A local police chief announced the arrests of six suspected al-Qa`ida members near Falluja, Anbar Province. – *AP*, October 22

October 22, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Suspected Pakistani Taliban militants assassinated a Pakistani brigadier amid heavy rush hour traffic in Islamabad. Two gunmen on motorbikes fired into Brigadier Moinuddin Haider's army vehicle, killing him and another soldier. His driver was injured. – *Guardian*, October 22

October 23, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber targeted Pakistan's Aeronautical Complex in Kamra, Punjab Province. The bomber detonated his explosives at the checkpoint to the entrance of the massive airbase, killing seven people. According to the *New York Times*, the facility is "the country's main air force maintenance and research hub, where engineers and workers build and overhaul fighter jets and radar systems." – *New York Times*, October 23

October 23, 2009 (LEBANON): A court in Lebanon convicted 11 men of having links to al-Qa`ida and of carrying out terrorist acts. The men, who were tried in absentia because they are still on the run, were sentenced to life in prison. They include six Palestinians, three Lebanese and two Syrians. – *AP*, October 24

October 24, 2009 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber killed a guard at a local political party office in Tikrit, Salah al-Din Province. – *Reuters*, October 24

October 24, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Pakistani military forces recaptured the strategic Kotkai town in South Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. According to Reuters, the town "has changed hands three times since the army launched a major offensive on Taliban strongholds a week ago." Kotkai is the birthplace of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan leader Hakimullah Mehsud. TTP operative Qari Hussain Mehsud is also from the town. – *Reuters*, October 24

October 25, 2009 (IRAQ): Two bombs ripped through Baghdad, killing 155 people. The explosions were the result of two suicide bombers driving explosives-packed cars. The bombers targeted the Justice Ministry and the Baghdad Provincial Council building. More than 500 people were injured. The Islamic State of Iraq claimed credit for the attacks. – *Wall Street Journal*, November 4; *Bloomberg*, October 27

October 25, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber in an explosives-laden vehicle killed a Pakistani policeman near the town of Lillah, which is approximately 87 miles south of Islamabad. The bomber detonated the explosives because a patrol officer wanted to inspect the vehicle. – *AFP*, October 24

October 27, 2009 (UNITED STATES): Federal prosecutors unsealed charges against two men allegedly involved in plotting a terrorist attack overseas. The men, David C. Headley (who changed his name three years ago from Daood Gilani) and Tahawwur Hussain Rana, are both in U.S. custody. Both men have been living in Chicago, and it is believed that Headley met with fighters from the Pakistani militant group Lashkar-i-Tayyiba, in addition to Ilyas Kashmiri, a jihadist operative. Authorities accuse the men of plotting to attack the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* in retaliation for it printing editorial cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad in 2005. Headley was born in the United States but moved to Pakistan as a child. Rana was born in Pakistan, but became a Canadian citizen and lived in the Chicago area.

Both men were schoolmates in Pakistan. – *Washington Post*, October 28; *AP*, October 27

October 27, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Seven U.S. soldiers in armored vehicles were killed during a patrol in Kandahar Province. – *AP*, October 27

October 27, 2009 (RUSSIA): A suicide bomber blew himself up in Grozny, killing one police officer. – *RIA Novosti*, October 30

October 28, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Afghan Taliban militants attacked a private guesthouse in central Kabul and killed five UN staff members, including an American. – *CNN*, November 1

October 28, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A powerful car bomb ripped through Peshawar, killing more than 100 people. The blast came just hours after the arrival of U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in Islamabad. – *AFP*, October 28

October 29, 2009 (UNITED STATES): A U.S. federal judge sentenced Ali Saleh Kahlah al-Marri to more than eight years in prison for his role in trying to aid al-Qa`ida in the United States. In May 2009, al-Marri admitted attending terrorist training camps from 1998 to 2001, meeting with Khalid Shaykh Muhammad, and to having "offered his services" to al-Qa`ida. Al-Marri has been in U.S. custody since December 2001. – *New York Times*, October 29

October 29, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): In the wake of the October 28 attack that killed five UN staff members in Kabul, the United Nations began evacuating "non-essential" staff from the city. – *TimesOnline*, October 30

October 29, 2009 (IRAQ): Iraqi authorities announced the arrests of 61 police and army officials in charge of the Baghdad district where two bombs killed 155 people on October 25. The government also said that it would no longer allow television networks to broadcast live during the aftermath of a bombing. – *Washington Post*, October 30

October 29, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Pakistani authorities announced that they had found the passport of Said Bahaji, a close associate of Muhammad Atta, the lead hijacker in the September 11, 2001 attacks. Authorities found the

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**SUPPORT**

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The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and not of the U.S. Military Academy, the Department of the Army, or any other agency of the U.S. Government.

passport during operations in South Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Bahaji is an alleged member of the Hamburg, Germany 9/11 cell. German police have been searching for Bahaji since 2001. – *Wall Street Journal*, October 30

October 29, 2009 (ISRAEL): A group calling itself the Battalions of Ziad Jarrah claimed responsibility for firing a rocket into northern Israel from Lebanon on October 27. – *AP*, October 29

October 30, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber targeted a vehicle carrying Afghan intelligence officers near Kandahar. The blast killed three officers. – *New York Times*, October 30

October 30, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): South Korea announced that it would send troops and police officers to Afghanistan to help protect its aid workers. South Korea withdrew its 200 troops from Afghanistan two years ago. The plans for reinstating a deployment still have to be approved by parliament. – *New York Times*, October 31

October 30, 2009 (RUSSIA): A suicide bomber blew himself up after being surrounded by police in the Lenin district of Grozny. There were no other casualties. – *RIA Novosti*, October 30

October 31, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A roadside bomb killed seven paramilitary soldiers in Khyber Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. – *AP*, October 31

October 31, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Suspected Pakistani Taliban militants blew up a boys school in Bajaur Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. – *AP*, October 31

October 31, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Pakistani fighter jets bombed three Pakistani Taliban targets in Orakzai Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, killing at least eight militants. – *AP*, October 31